

FOUR AND TWENTY TOILERS



PICTURES BY
F. D. BEDFORD
VERSES BY
E. V. LUCAS.
JOINT AUTHORS
OF
"THE BOOK
OF
SHOPS"

MCDONALD - WILSON'S, INC., NEW YORK

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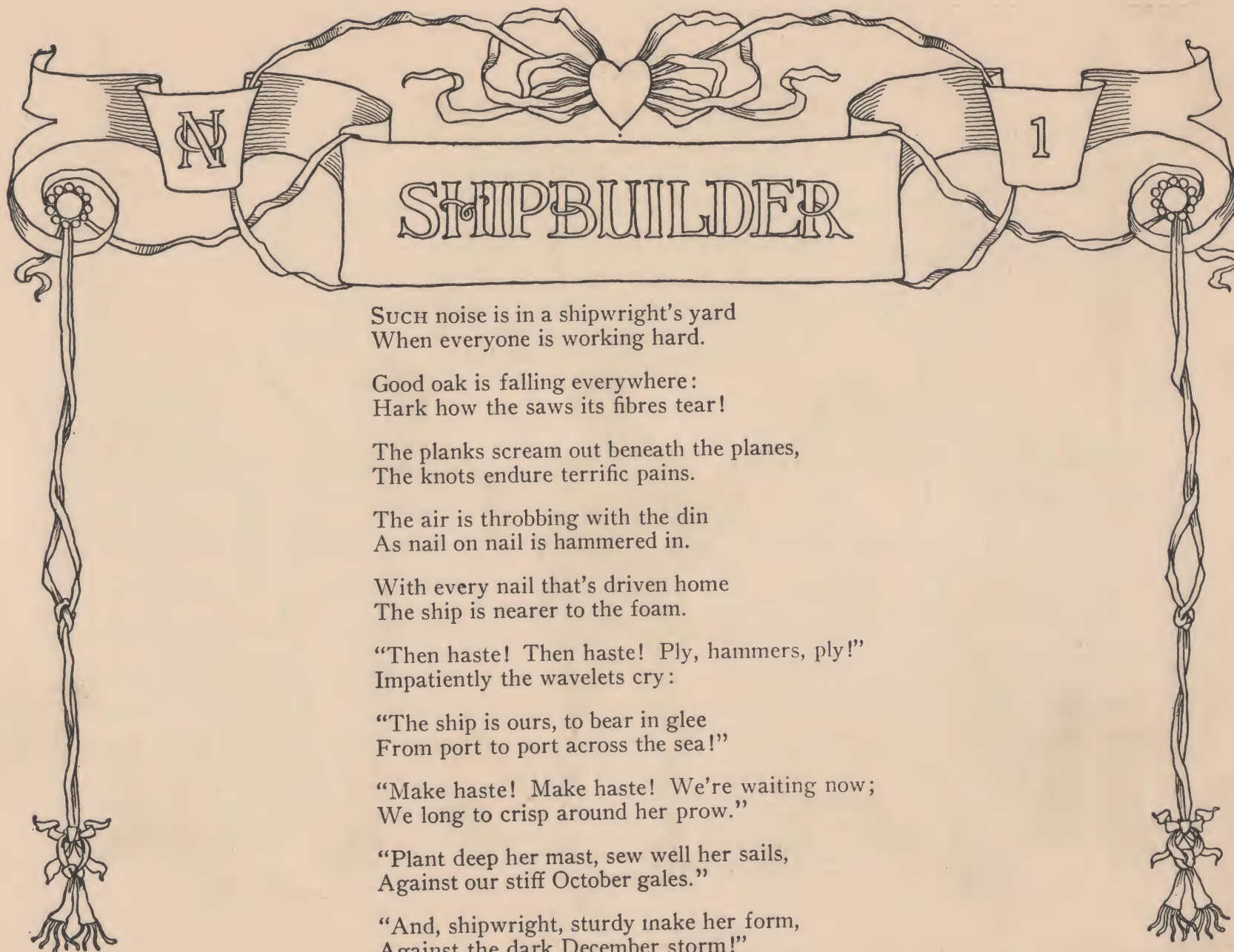
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241

THE GREAT WALL
OF CHINA
JANUARY 1911







SUCH noise is in a shipwright's yard
When everyone is working hard.

Good oak is falling everywhere:
Hark how the saws its fibres tear!

The planks scream out beneath the planes,
The knots endure terrific pains.

The air is throbbing with the din
As nail on nail is hammered in.

With every nail that's driven home
The ship is nearer to the foam.

"Then haste! Then haste! Ply, hammers, ply!"
Impatiently the wavelets cry:

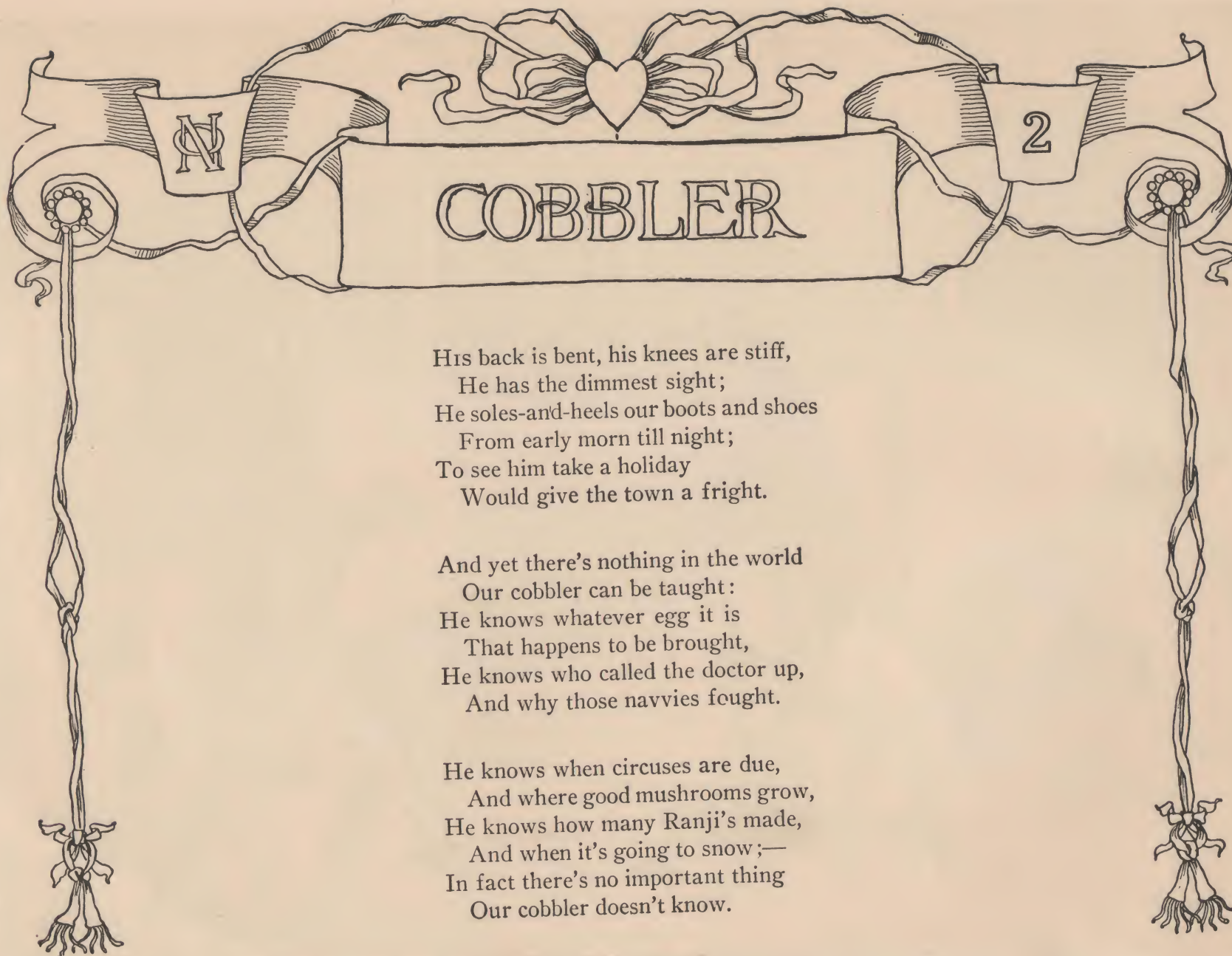
"The ship is ours, to bear in glee
From port to port across the sea!"

"Make haste! Make haste! We're waiting now;
We long to crisp around her prow."

"Plant deep her mast, sew well her sails,
Against our stiff October gales."

"And, shipwright, sturdy make her form,
Against the dark December storm!"

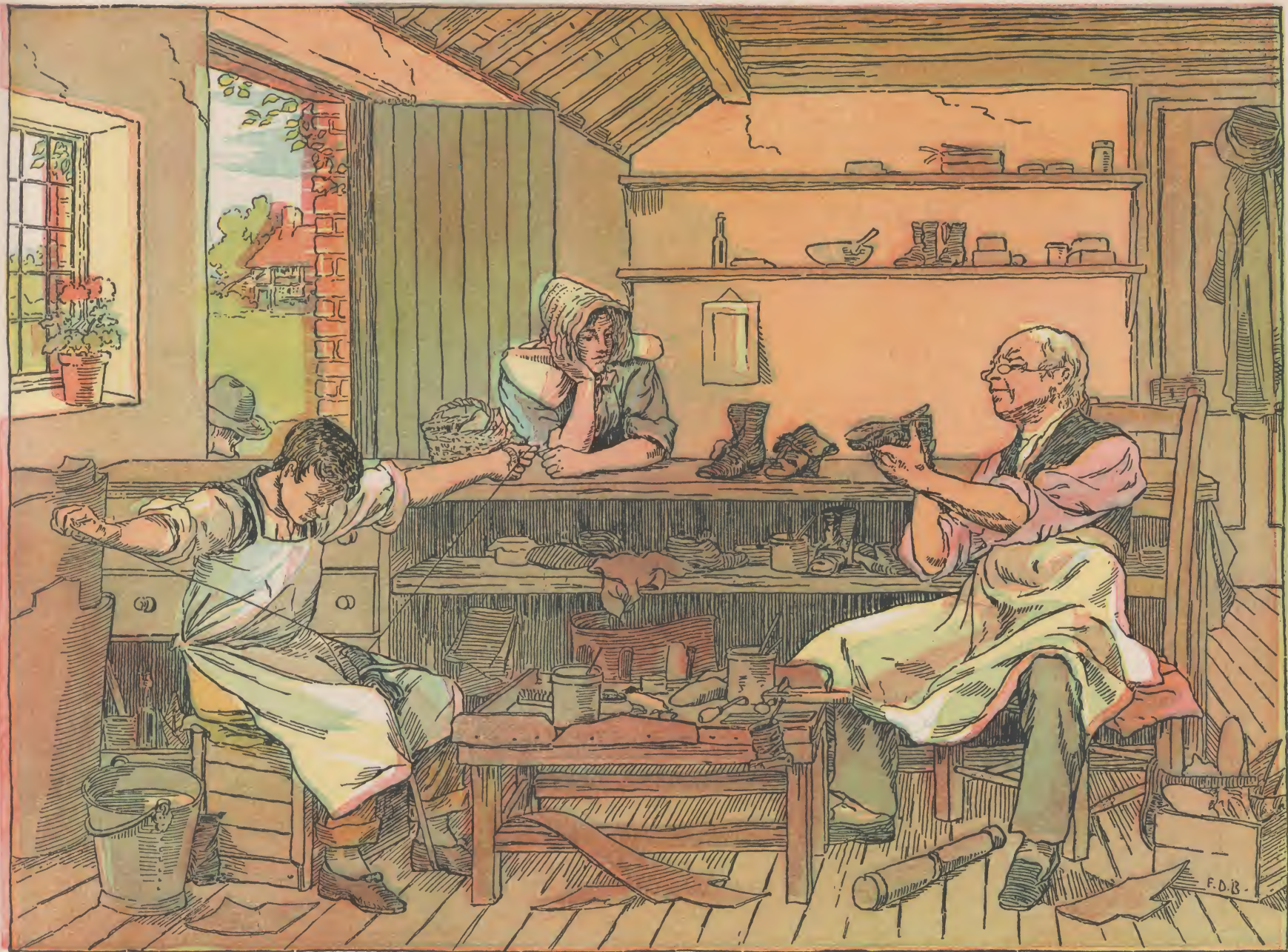


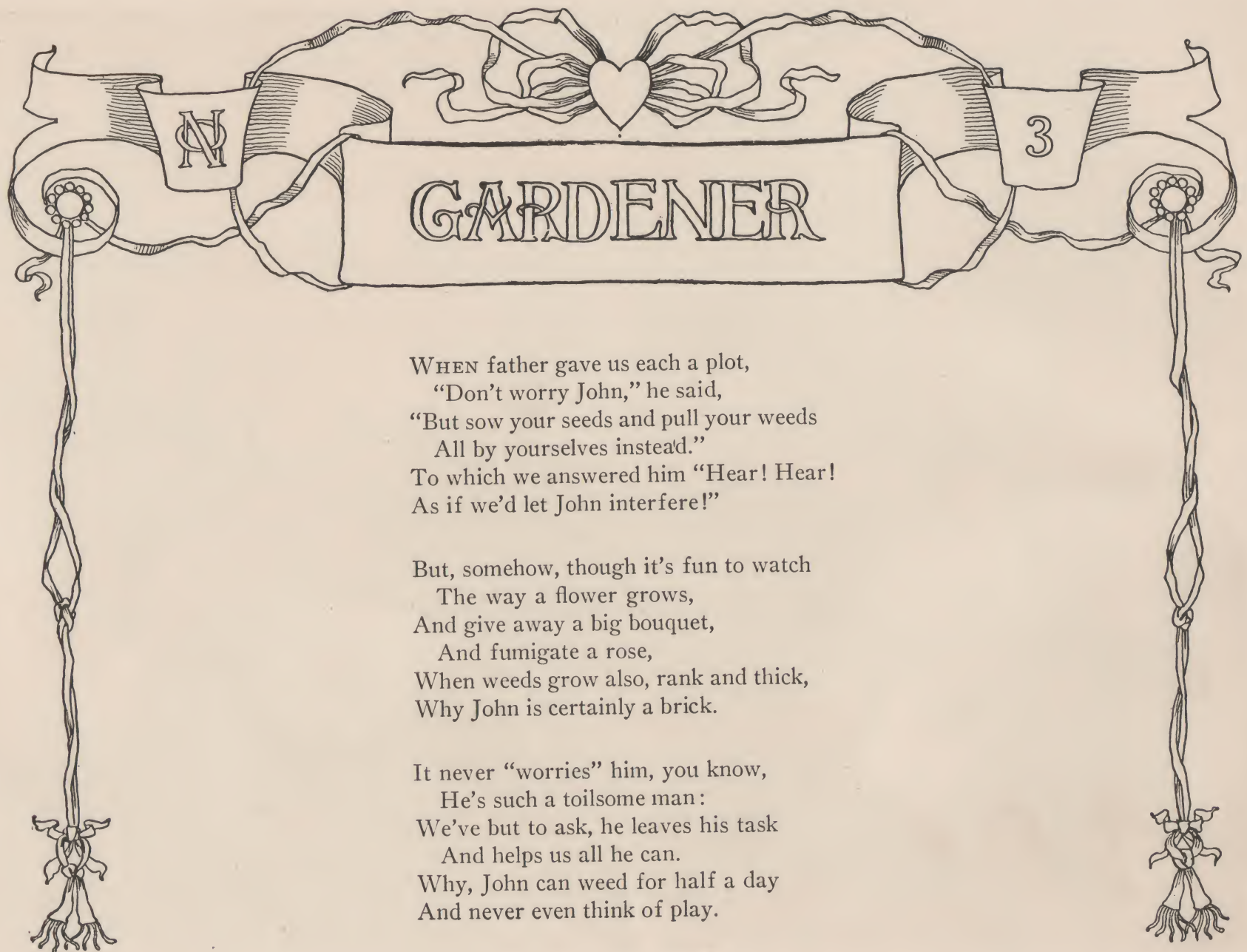


His back is bent, his knees are stiff,
He has the dimmest sight;
He soles-and-heels our boots and shoes
From early morn till night;
To see him take a holiday
Would give the town a fright.

And yet there's nothing in the world
Our cobbler can be taught:
He knows whatever egg it is
That happens to be brought,
He knows who called the doctor up,
And why those navvies feught.

He knows when circuses are due,
And where good mushrooms grow,
He knows how many Ranji's made,
And when it's going to snow;—
In fact there's no important thing
Our cobbler doesn't know.





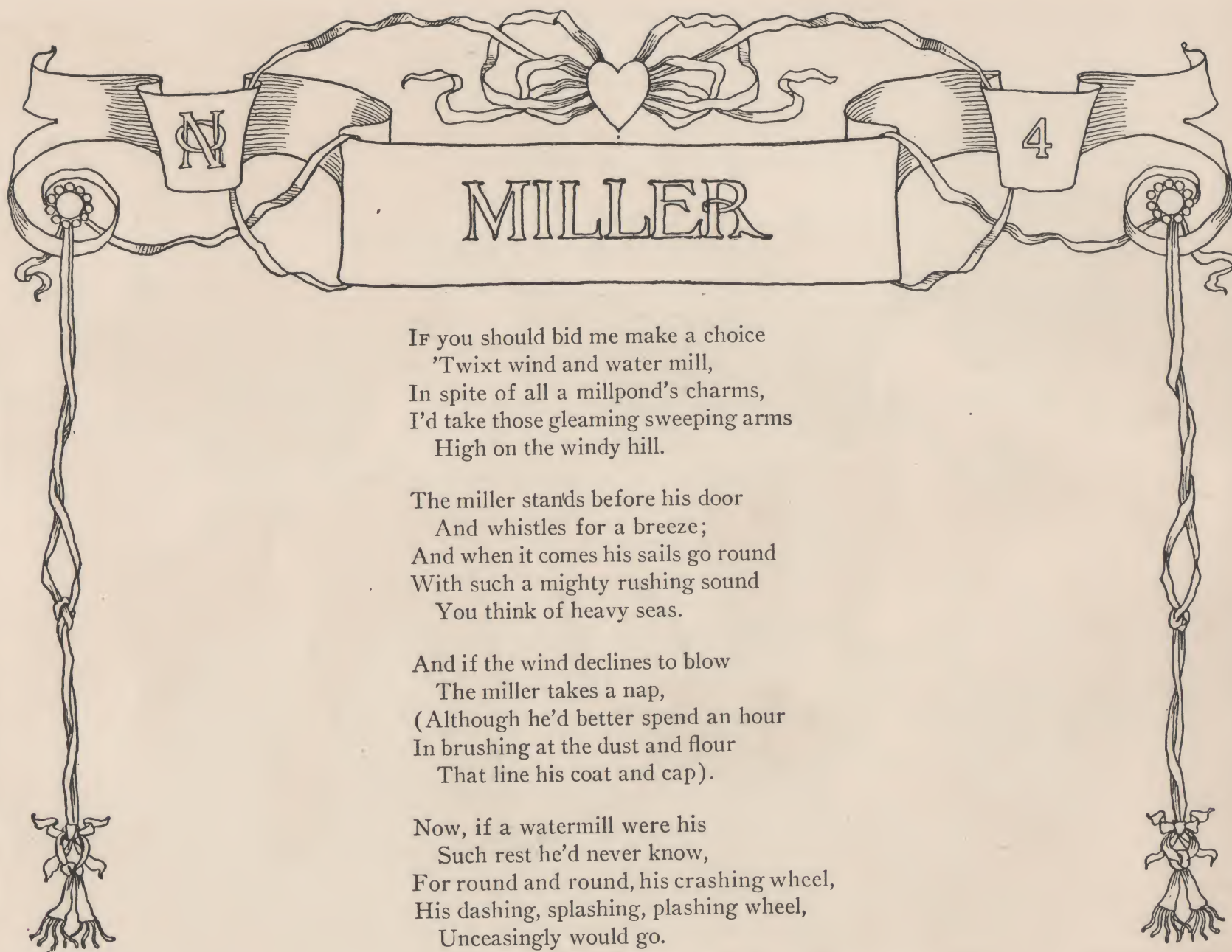
WHEN father gave us each a plot,
"Don't worry John," he said,
"But sow your seeds and pull your weeds
All by yourselves instead."
To which we answered him "Hear! Hear!
As if we'd let John interfere!"

But, somehow, though it's fun to watch
The way a flower grows,
And give away a big bouquet,
And fumigate a rose,
When weeds grow also, rank and thick,
Why John is certainly a brick.

It never "worries" him, you know,
He's such a toilsome man:
We've but to ask, he leaves his task
And helps us all he can.
Why, John can weed for half a day
And never even think of play.



F.D.B.



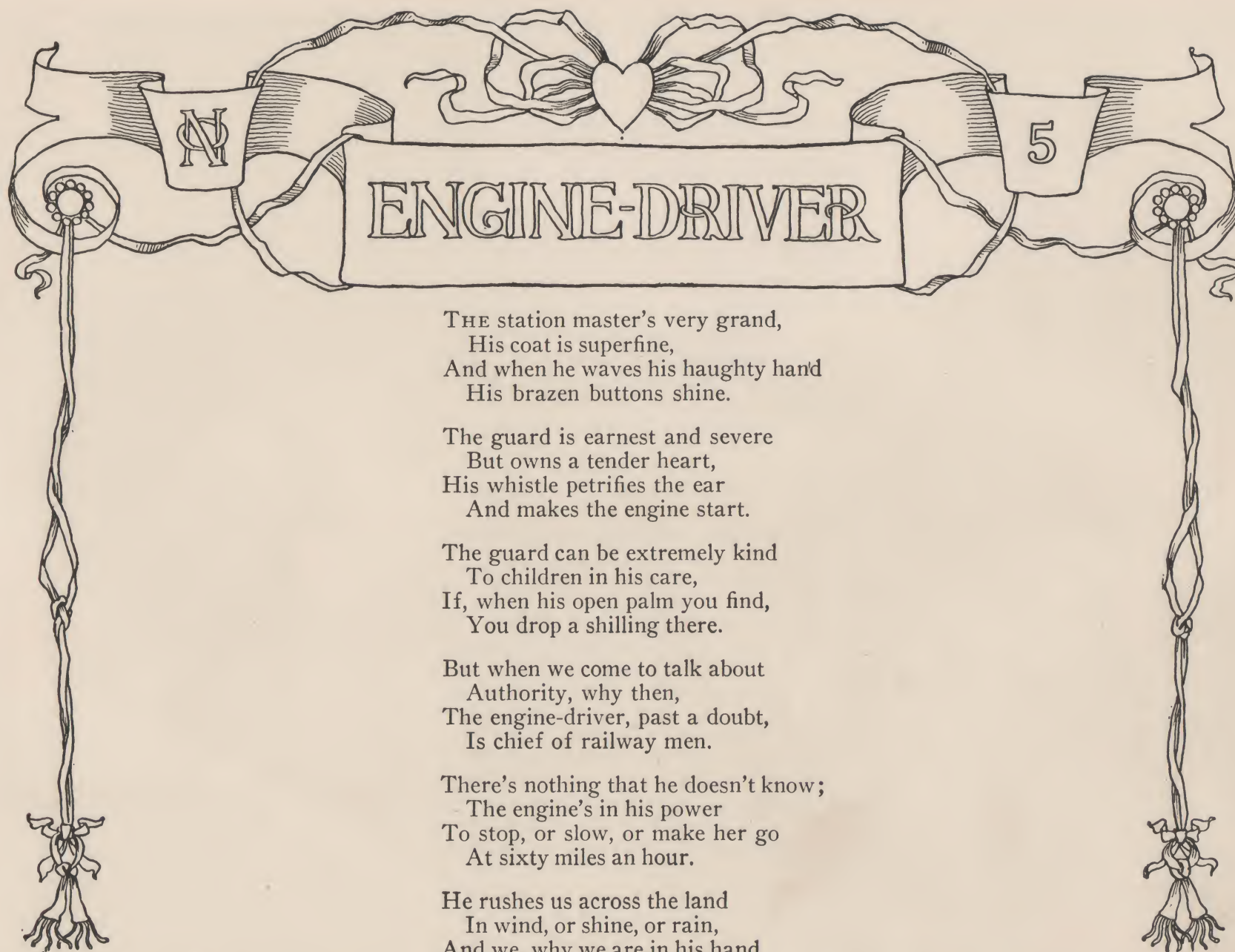
If you should bid me make a choice
'Twixt wind and water mill,
In spite of all a millpond's charms,
I'd take those gleaming sweeping arms
High on the windy hill.

The miller stands before his door
And whistles for a breeze;
And when it comes his sails go round
With such a mighty rushing sound
You think of heavy seas.

And if the wind declines to blow
The miller takes a nap,
(Although he'd better spend an hour
In brushing at the dust and flour
That line his coat and cap).

Now, if a watermill were his
Such rest he'd never know,
For round and round, his crashing wheel,
His dashing, splashing, plashing wheel,
Unceasingly would go.





THE station master's very grand,
His coat is superfine,
And when he waves his haughty hand
His brazen buttons shine.

The guard is earnest and severe
But owns a tender heart,
His whistle petrifies the ear
And makes the engine start.

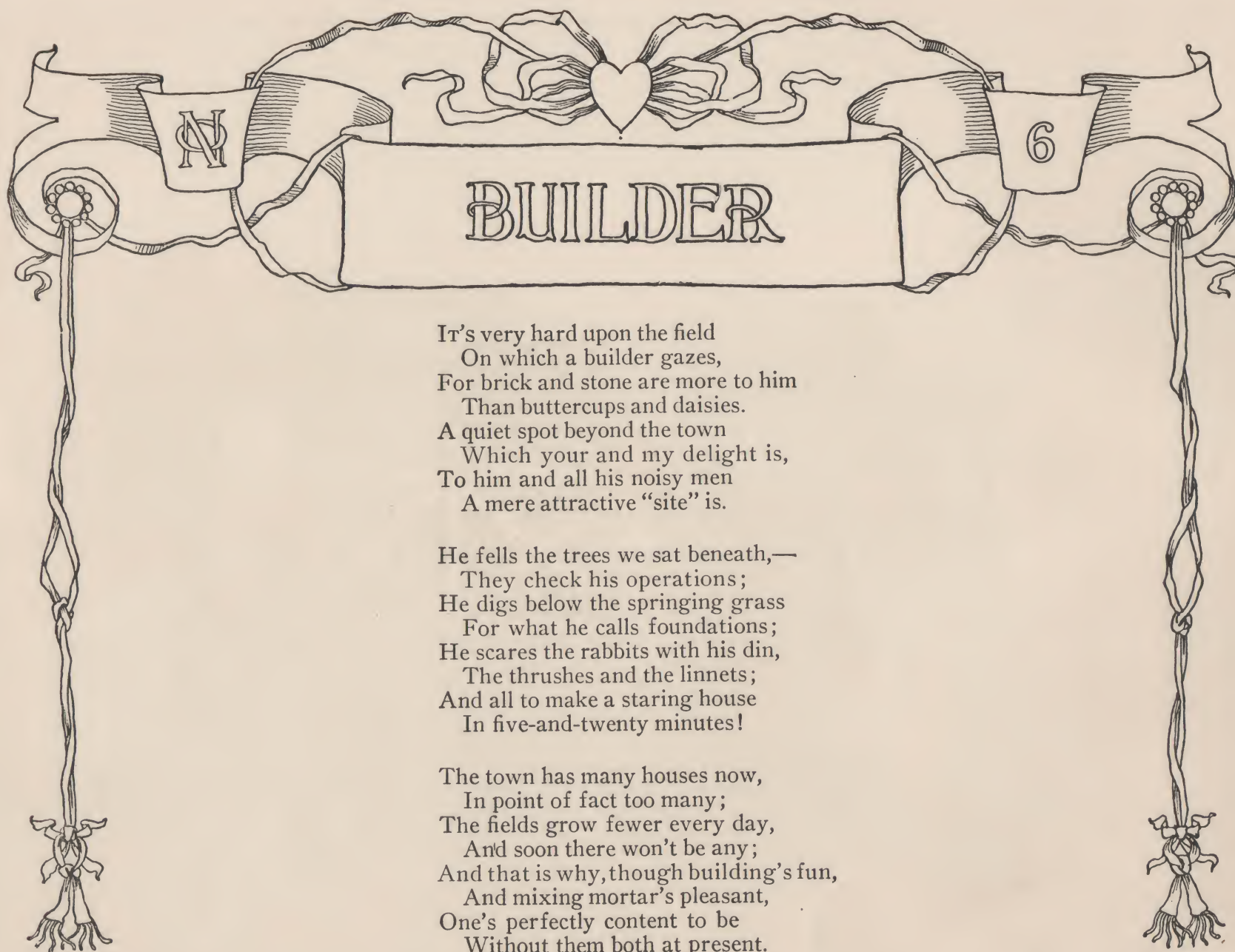
The guard can be extremely kind
To children in his care,
If, when his open palm you find,
You drop a shilling there.

But when we come to talk about
Authority, why then,
The engine-driver, past a doubt,
Is chief of railway men.

There's nothing that he doesn't know;
The engine's in his power
To stop, or slow, or make her go
At sixty miles an hour.

He rushes us across the land
In wind, or shine, or rain,
And we, why we are in his hand
Whene'er we use the train.



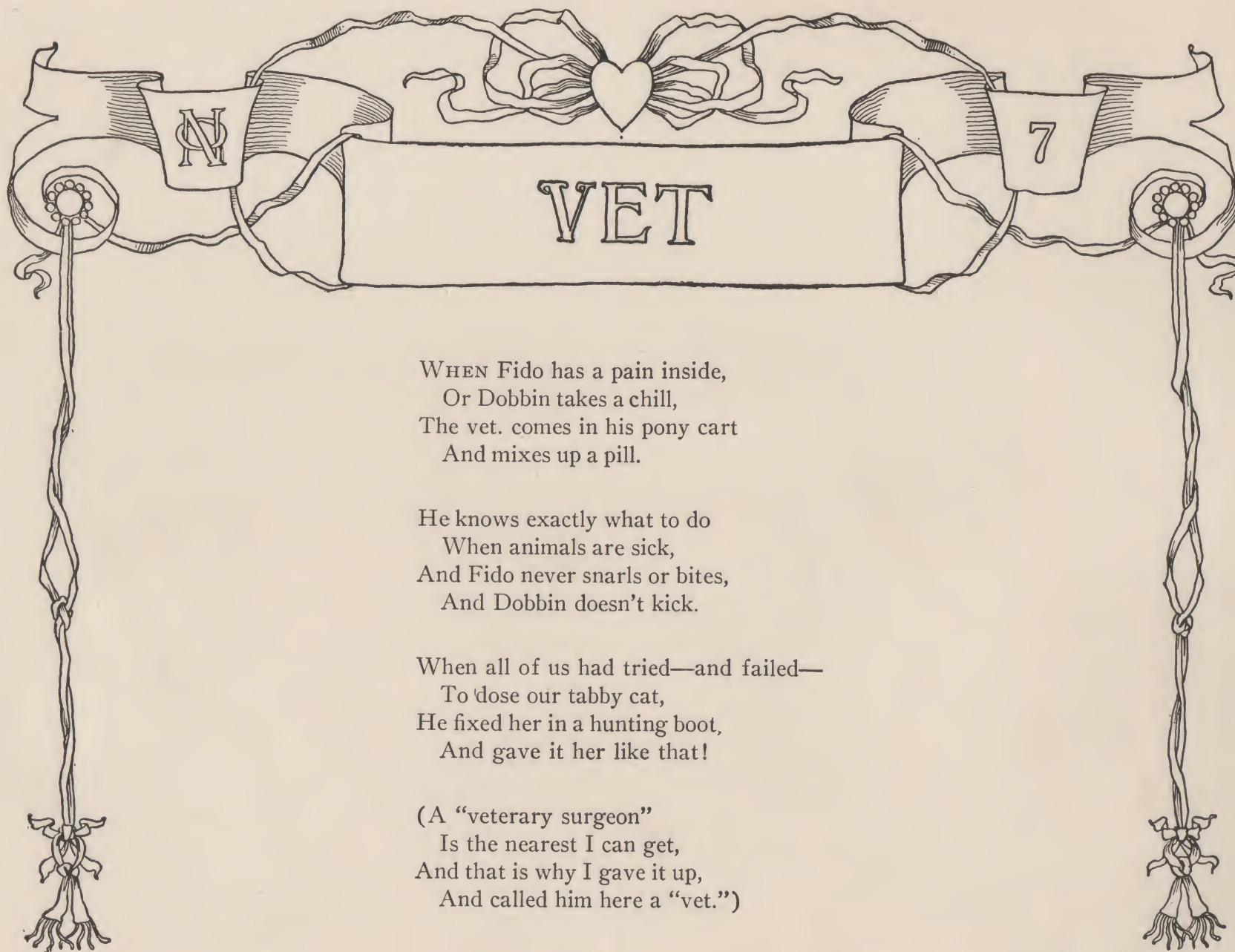


It's very hard upon the field
On which a builder gazes,
For brick and stone are more to him
Than buttercups and daisies.
A quiet spot beyond the town
Which your and my delight is,
To him and all his noisy men
A mere attractive "site" is.

He fells the trees we sat beneath,—
They check his operations;
He digs below the springing grass
For what he calls foundations;
He scares the rabbits with his din,
The thrushes and the linnets;
And all to make a staring house
In five-and-twenty minutes!

The town has many houses now,
In point of fact too many;
The fields grow fewer every day,
And soon there won't be any;
And that is why, though building's fun,
And mixing mortar's pleasant,
One's perfectly content to be
Without them both at present.





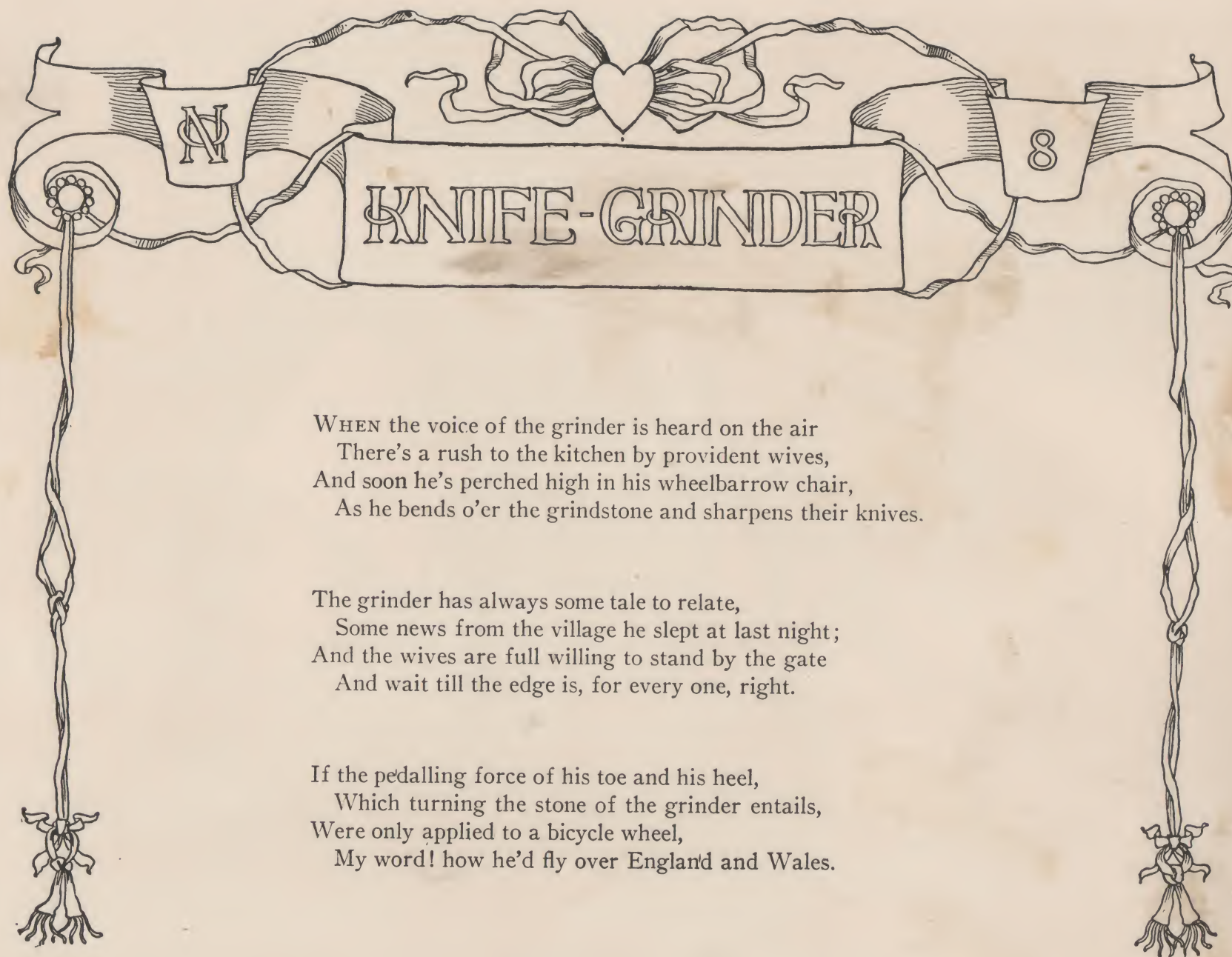
WHEN Fido has a pain inside,
Or Dobbin takes a chill,
The vet. comes in his pony cart
And mixes up a pill.

He knows exactly what to do
When animals are sick,
And Fido never snarls or bites,
And Dobbin doesn't kick.

When all of us had tried—and failed—
To 'dose our tabby cat,
He fixed her in a hunting boot,
And gave it her like that!

(A "veterary surgeon"
Is the nearest I can get,
And that is why I gave it up,
And called him here a "vet.")

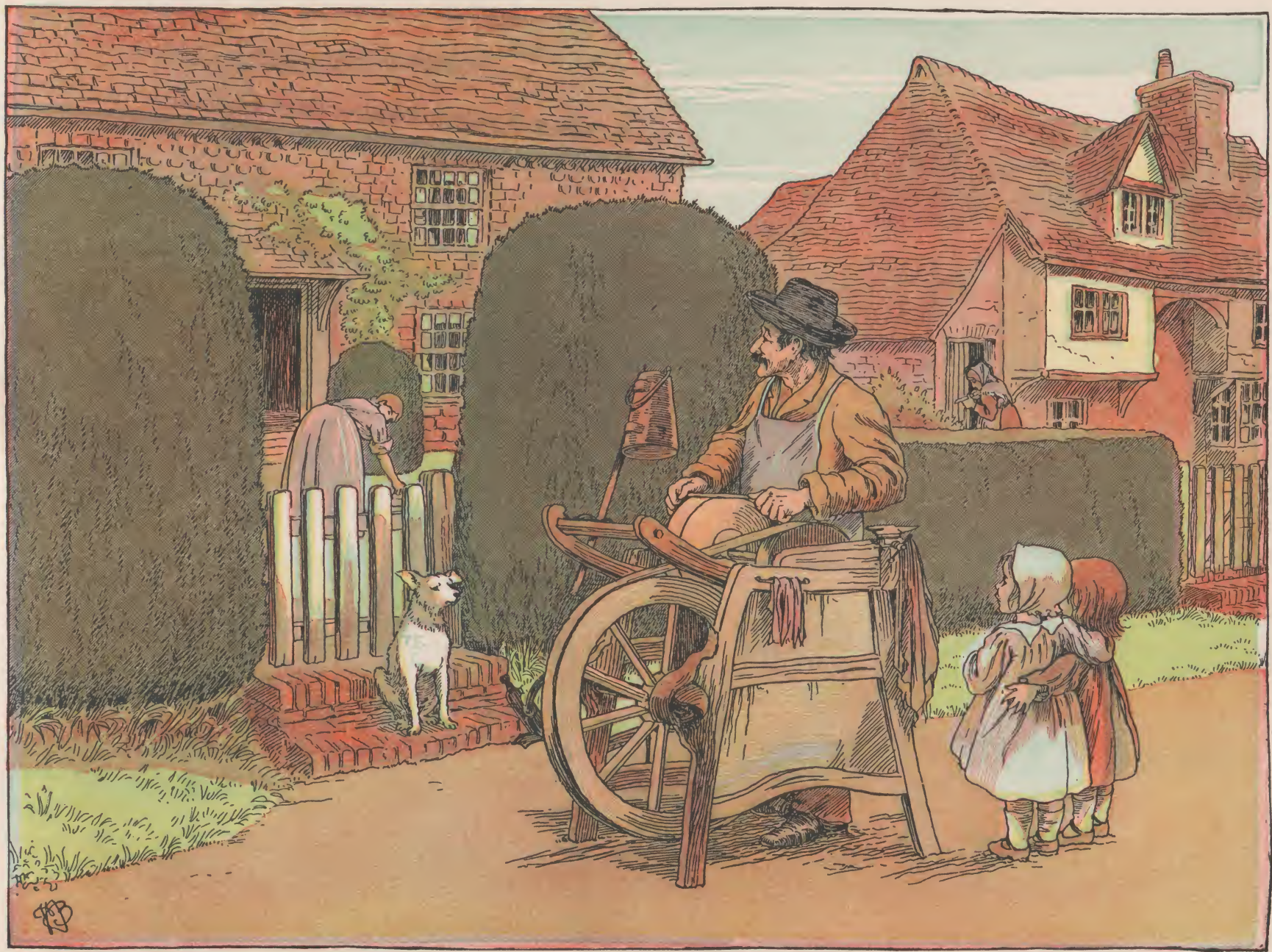


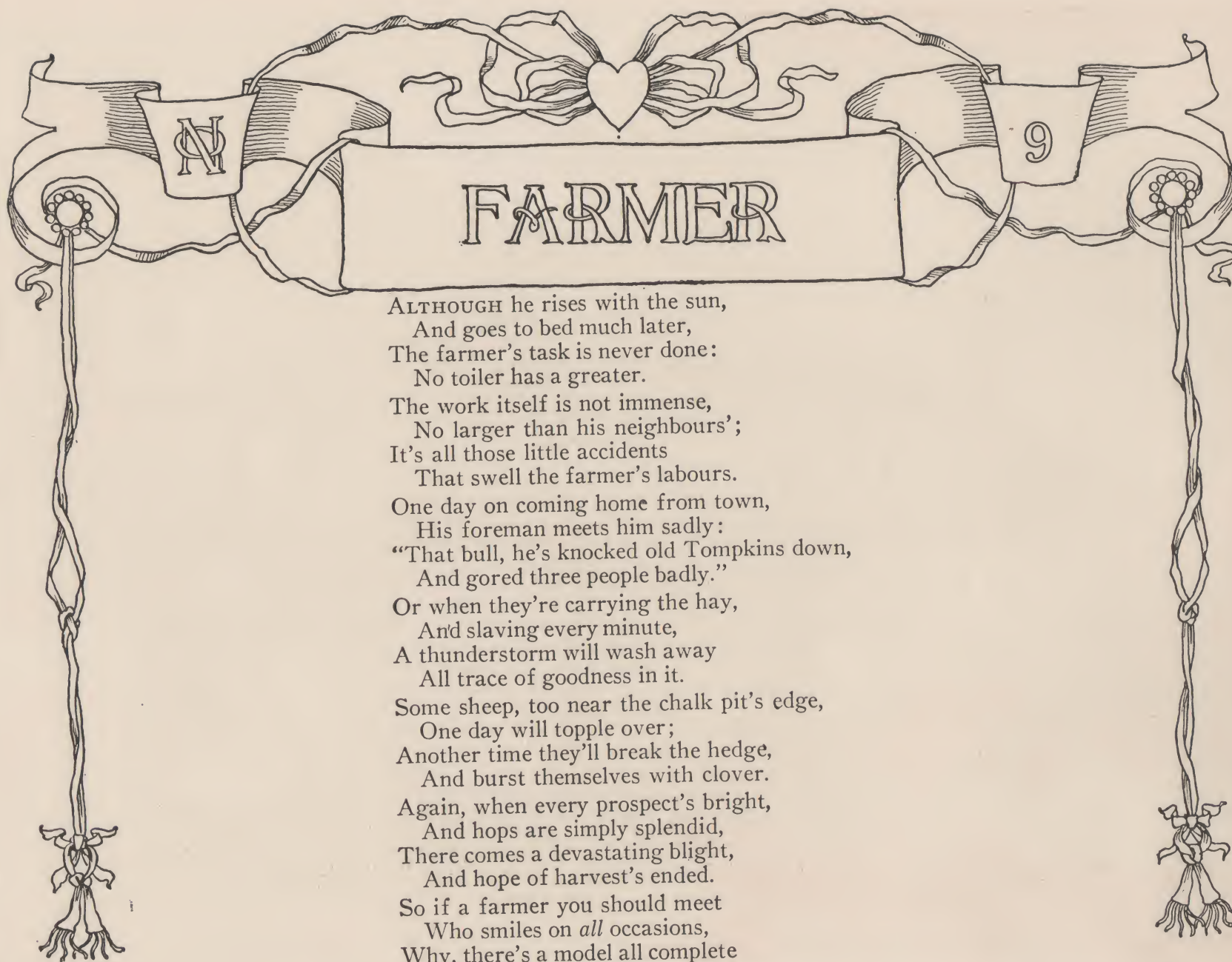


WHEN the voice of the grinder is heard on the air
There's a rush to the kitchen by provident wives,
And soon he's perched high in his wheelbarrow chair,
As he bends o'er the grindstone and sharpens their knives.

The grinder has always some tale to relate,
Some news from the village he slept at last night;
And the wives are full willing to stand by the gate
And wait till the edge is, for every one, right.

If the pedalling force of his toe and his heel,
Which turning the stone of the grinder entails,
Were only applied to a bicycle wheel,
My word! how he'd fly over England and Wales.

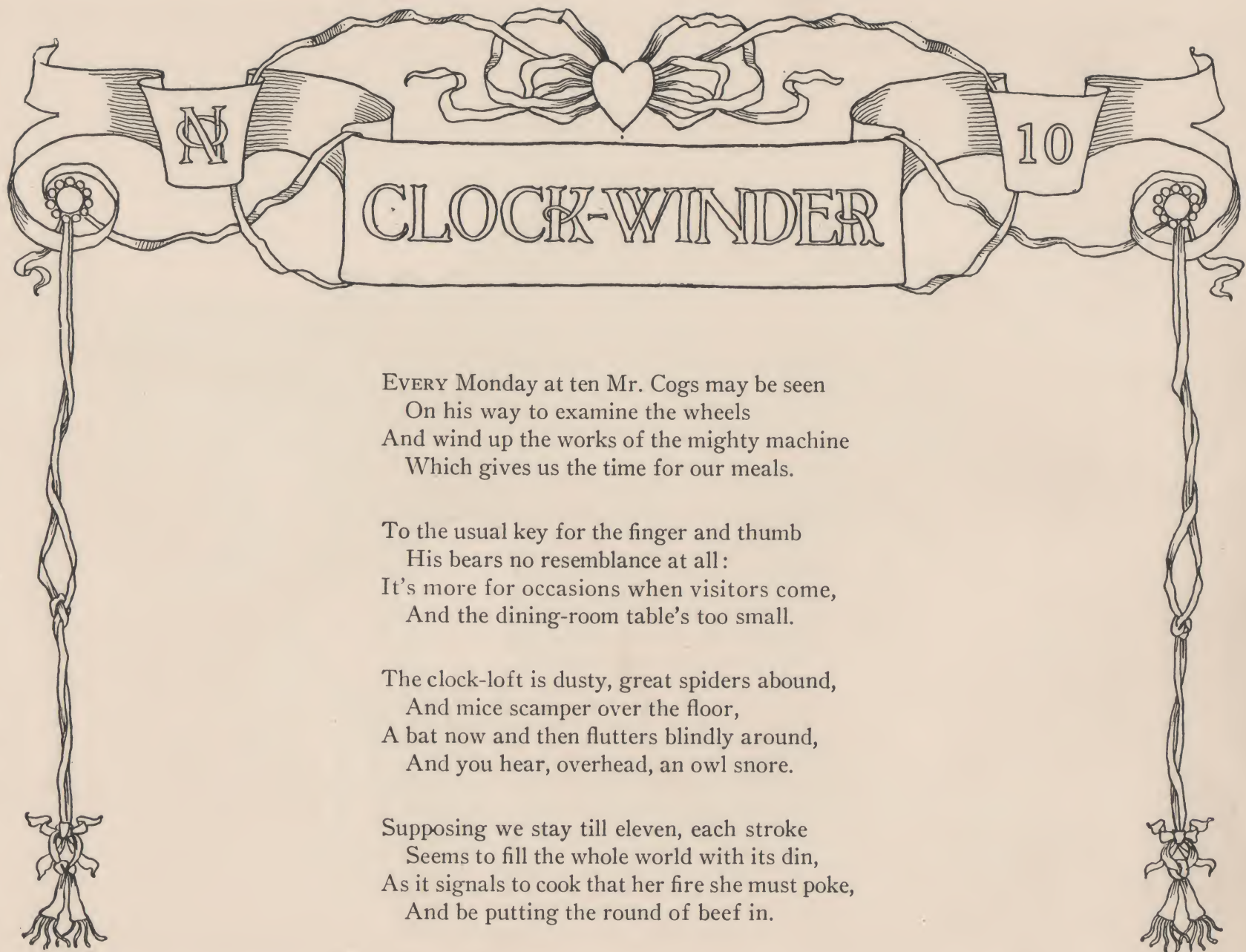




FARMER

ALTHOUGH he rises with the sun,
And goes to bed much later,
The farmer's task is never done:
No toiler has a greater.
The work itself is not immense,
No larger than his neighbours';
It's all those little accidents
That swell the farmer's labours.
One day on coming home from town,
His foreman meets him sadly:
"That bull, he's knocked old Tompkins down,
And gored three people badly."
Or when they're carrying the hay,
And slaving every minute,
A thunderstorm will wash away
All trace of goodness in it.
Some sheep, too near the chalk pit's edge,
One day will topple over;
Another time they'll break the hedge,
And burst themselves with clover.
Again, when every prospect's bright,
And hops are simply splendid,
There comes a devastating blight,
And hope of harvest's ended.
So if a farmer you should meet
Who smiles on *all* occasions,
Why, there's a model all complete
To show to your relations.





CLOCK-WINDER

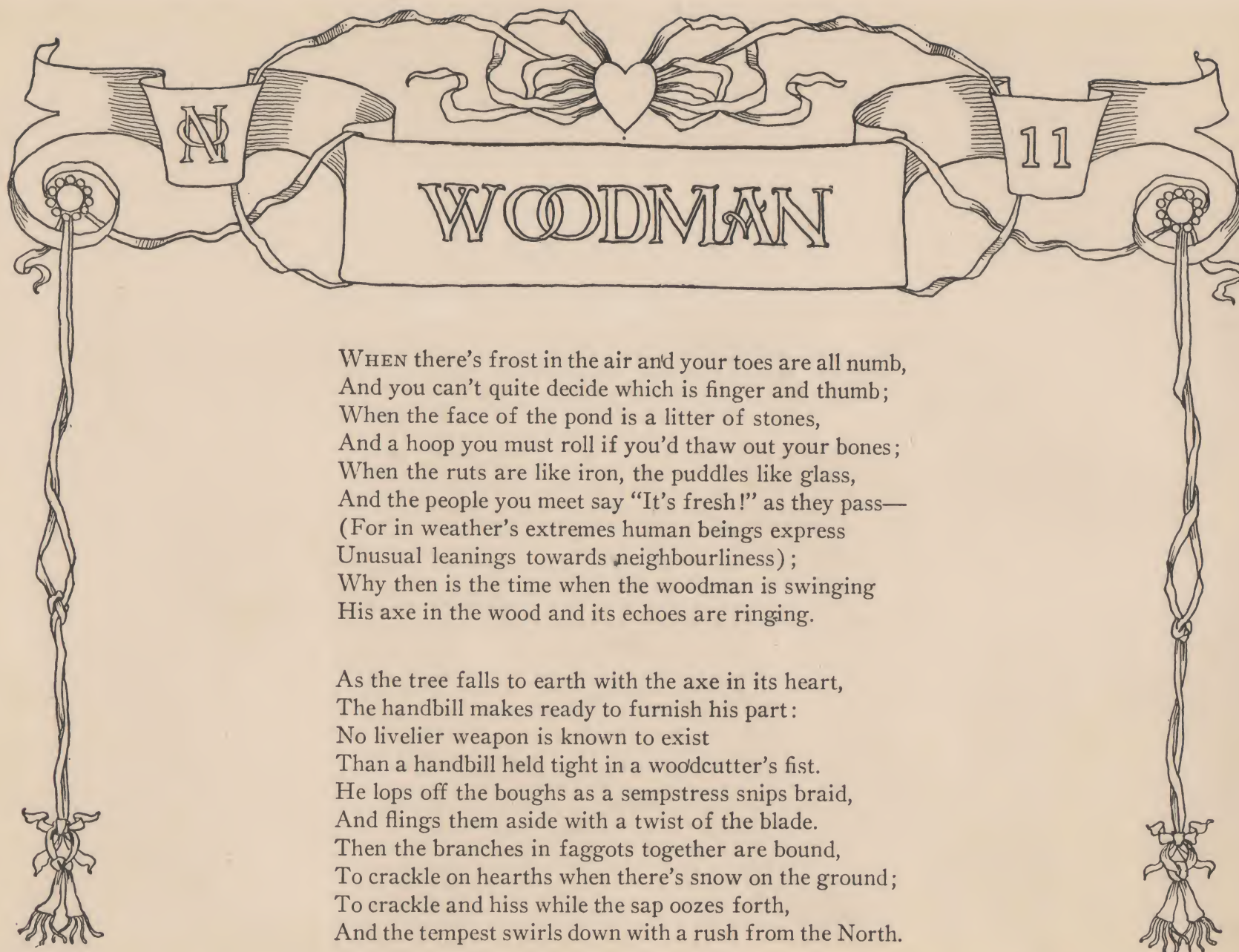
EVERY Monday at ten Mr. Cogs may be seen
On his way to examine the wheels
And wind up the works of the mighty machine
Which gives us the time for our meals.

To the usual key for the finger and thumb
His bears no resemblance at all:
It's more for occasions when visitors come,
And the dining-room table's too small.

The clock-loft is dusty, great spiders abound,
And mice scamper over the floor,
A bat now and then flutters blindly around,
And you hear, overhead, an owl snore.

Supposing we stay till eleven, each stroke
Seems to fill the whole world with its din,
As it signals to cook that her fire she must poke,
And be putting the round of beef in.

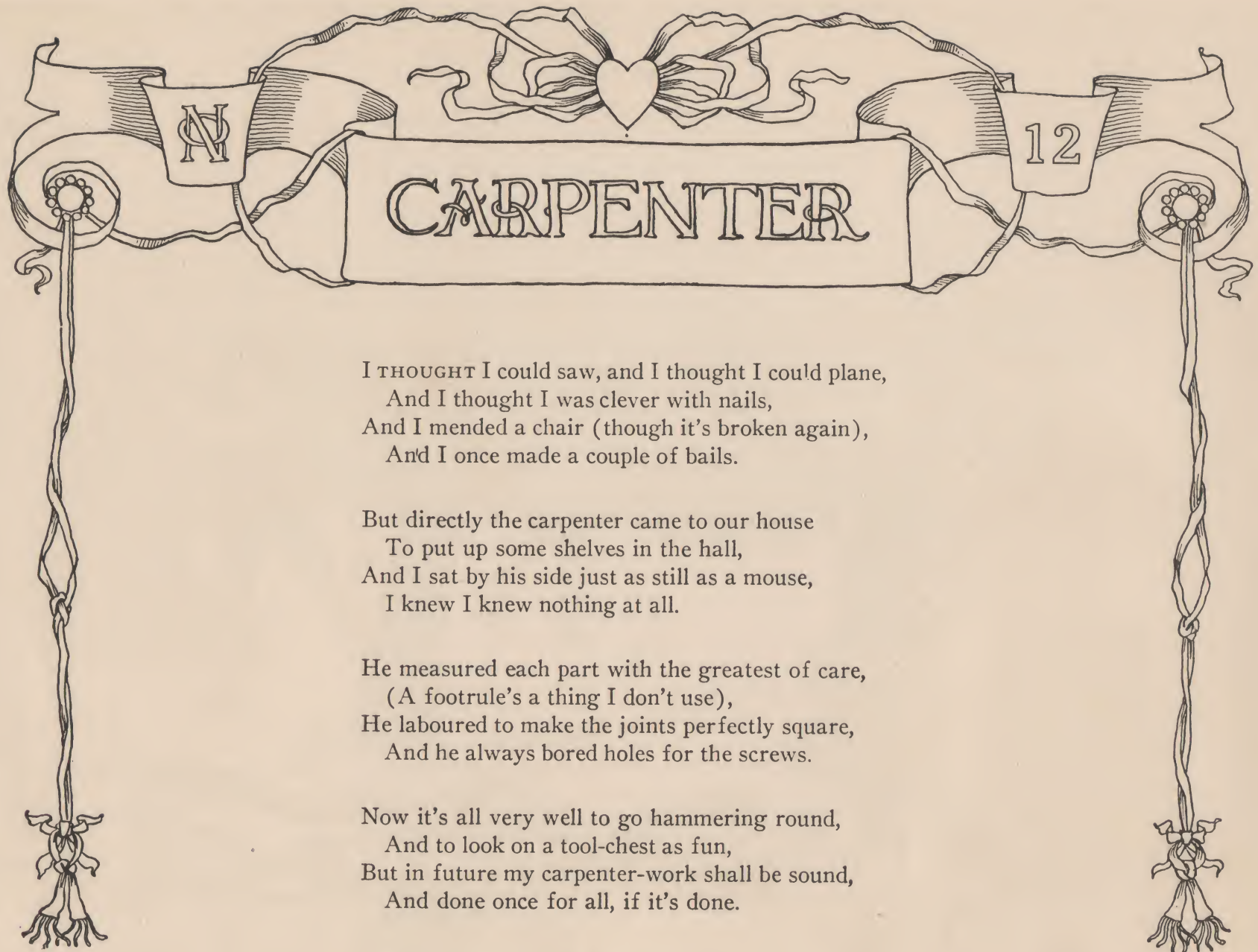




WHEN there's frost in the air and your toes are all numb,
And you can't quite decide which is finger and thumb;
When the face of the pond is a litter of stones,
And a hoop you must roll if you'd thaw out your bones;
When the ruts are like iron, the puddles like glass,
And the people you meet say "It's fresh!" as they pass—
(For in weather's extremes human beings express
Unusual leanings towards neighbourliness);
Why then is the time when the woodman is swinging
His axe in the wood and its echoes are ringing.

As the tree falls to earth with the axe in its heart,
The handbill makes ready to furnish his part:
No livelier weapon is known to exist
Than a handbill held tight in a woodcutter's fist.
He lops off the boughs as a sempstress snips braid,
And flings them aside with a twist of the blade.
Then the branches in faggots together are bound,
To crackle on hearths when there's snow on the ground;
To crackle and hiss while the sap oozes forth,
And the tempest swirls down with a rush from the North.



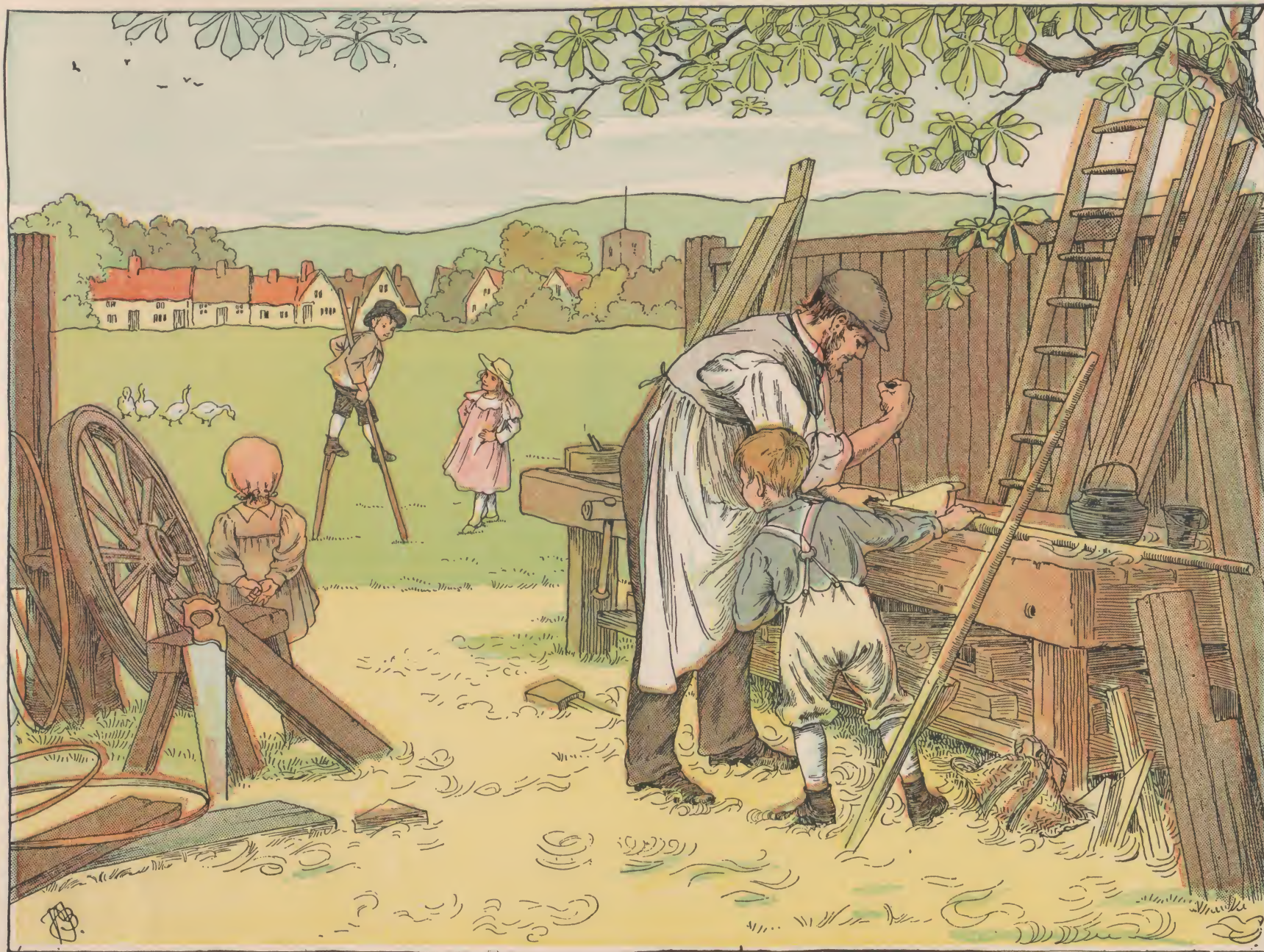


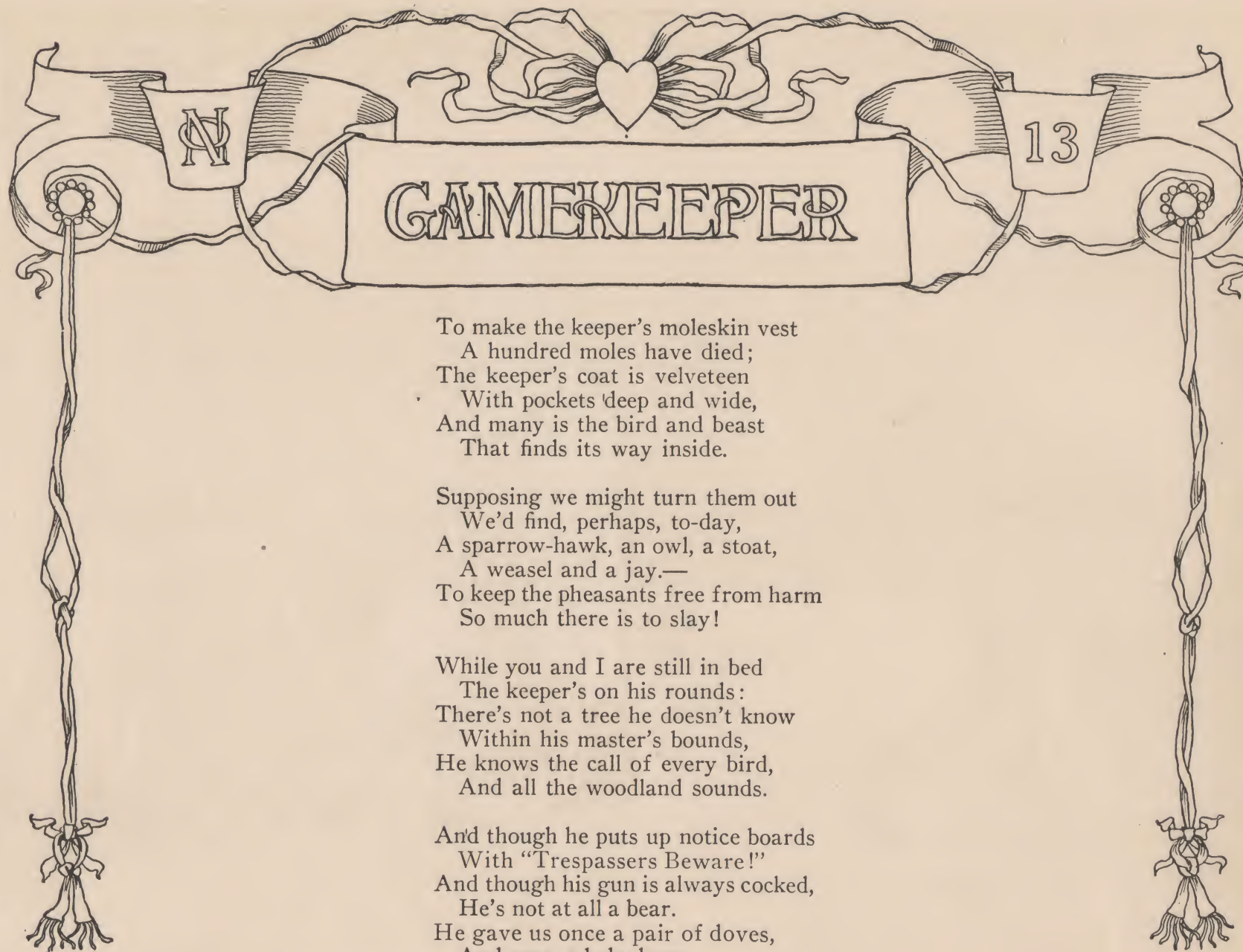
I THOUGHT I could saw, and I thought I could plane,
And I thought I was clever with nails,
And I mended a chair (though it's broken again),
And I once made a couple of bails.

But directly the carpenter came to our house
To put up some shelves in the hall,
And I sat by his side just as still as a mouse,
I knew I knew nothing at all.

He measured each part with the greatest of care,
(A footrule's a thing I don't use),
He laboured to make the joints perfectly square,
And he always bored holes for the screws.

Now it's all very well to go hammering round,
And to look on a tool-chest as fun,
But in future my carpenter-work shall be sound,
And done once for all, if it's done.





GAMIEKEEPER

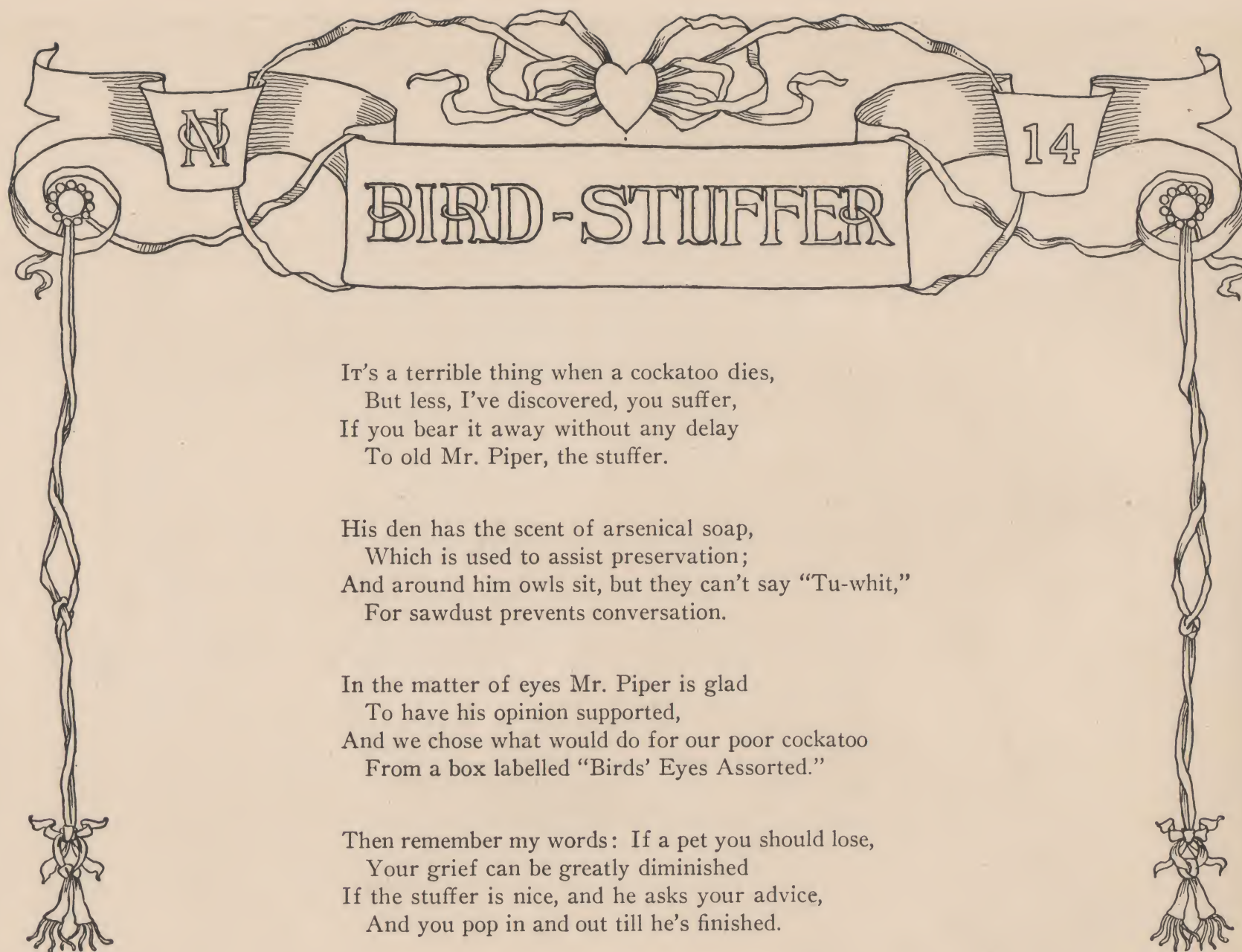
To make the keeper's moleskin vest
A hundred moles have died;
The keeper's coat is velveteen
With pockets deep and wide,
And many is the bird and beast
That finds its way inside.

Supposing we might turn them out
We'd find, perhaps, to-day,
A sparrow-hawk, an owl, a stoat,
A weasel and a jay.—
To keep the pheasants free from harm
So much there is to slay!

While you and I are still in bed
The keeper's on his rounds:
There's not a tree he doesn't know
Within his master's bounds,
He knows the call of every bird,
And all the woodland sounds.

And though he puts up notice boards
With "Trespassers Beware!"
And though his gun is always cocked,
He's not at all a bear.
He gave us once a pair of doves,
And once, a baby hare.



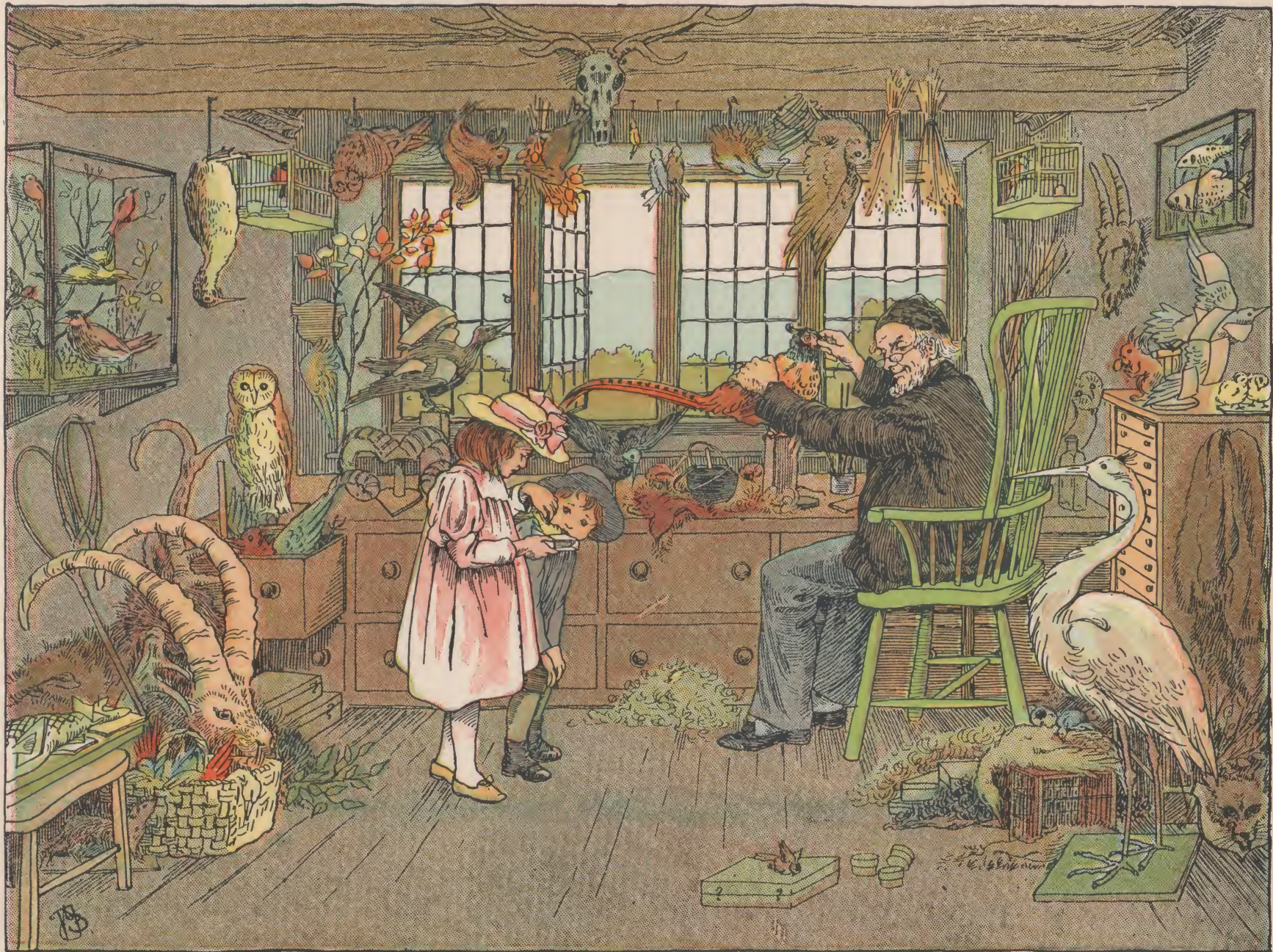


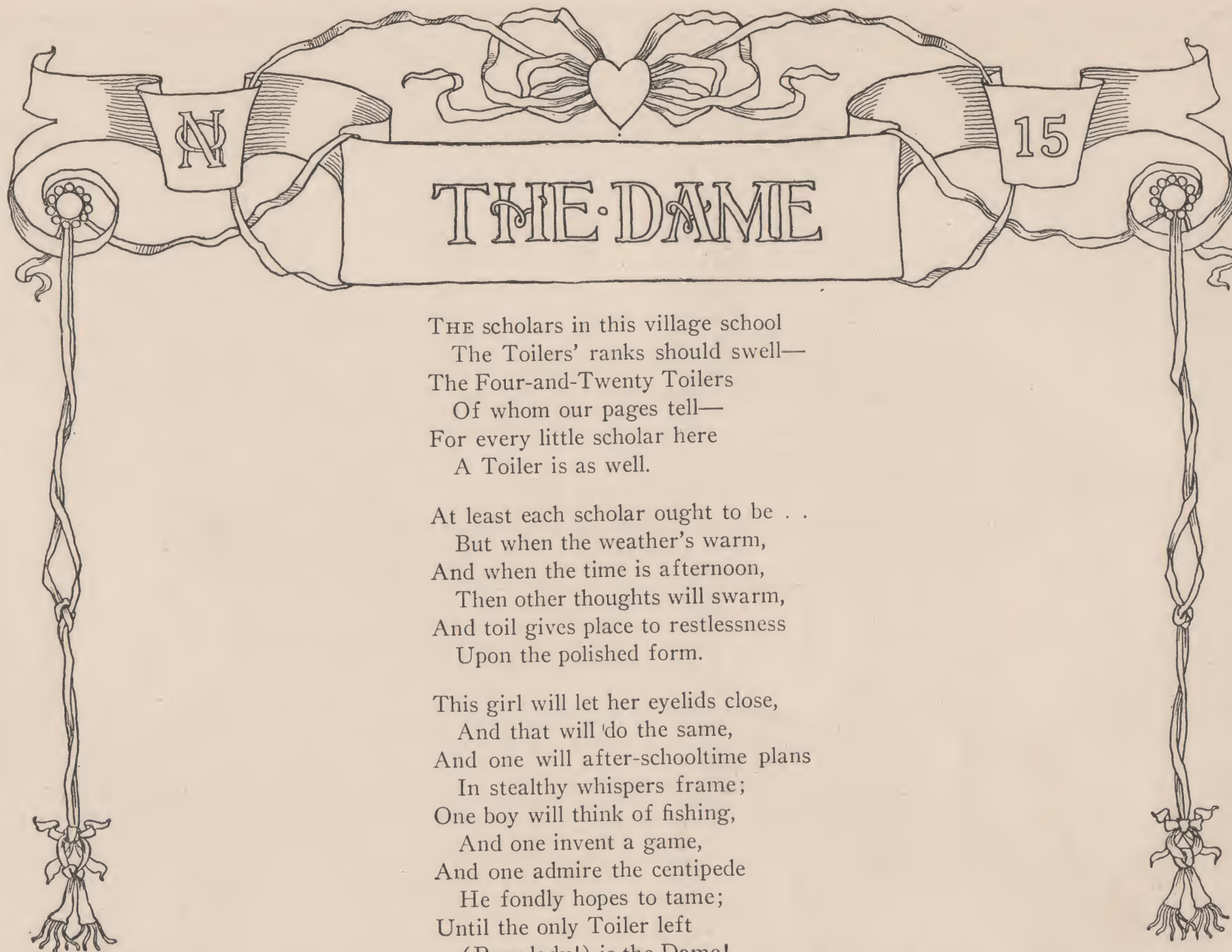
It's a terrible thing when a cockatoo dies,
But less, I've discovered, you suffer,
If you bear it away without any delay
To old Mr. Piper, the stuffer.

His den has the scent of arsenical soap,
Which is used to assist preservation;
And around him owls sit, but they can't say "Tu-whit,"
For sawdust prevents conversation.

In the matter of eyes Mr. Piper is glad
To have his opinion supported,
And we chose what would do for our poor cockatoo
From a box labelled "Birds' Eyes Assorted."

Then remember my words: If a pet you should lose,
Your grief can be greatly diminished
If the stuffer is nice, and he asks your advice,
And you pop in and out till he's finished.





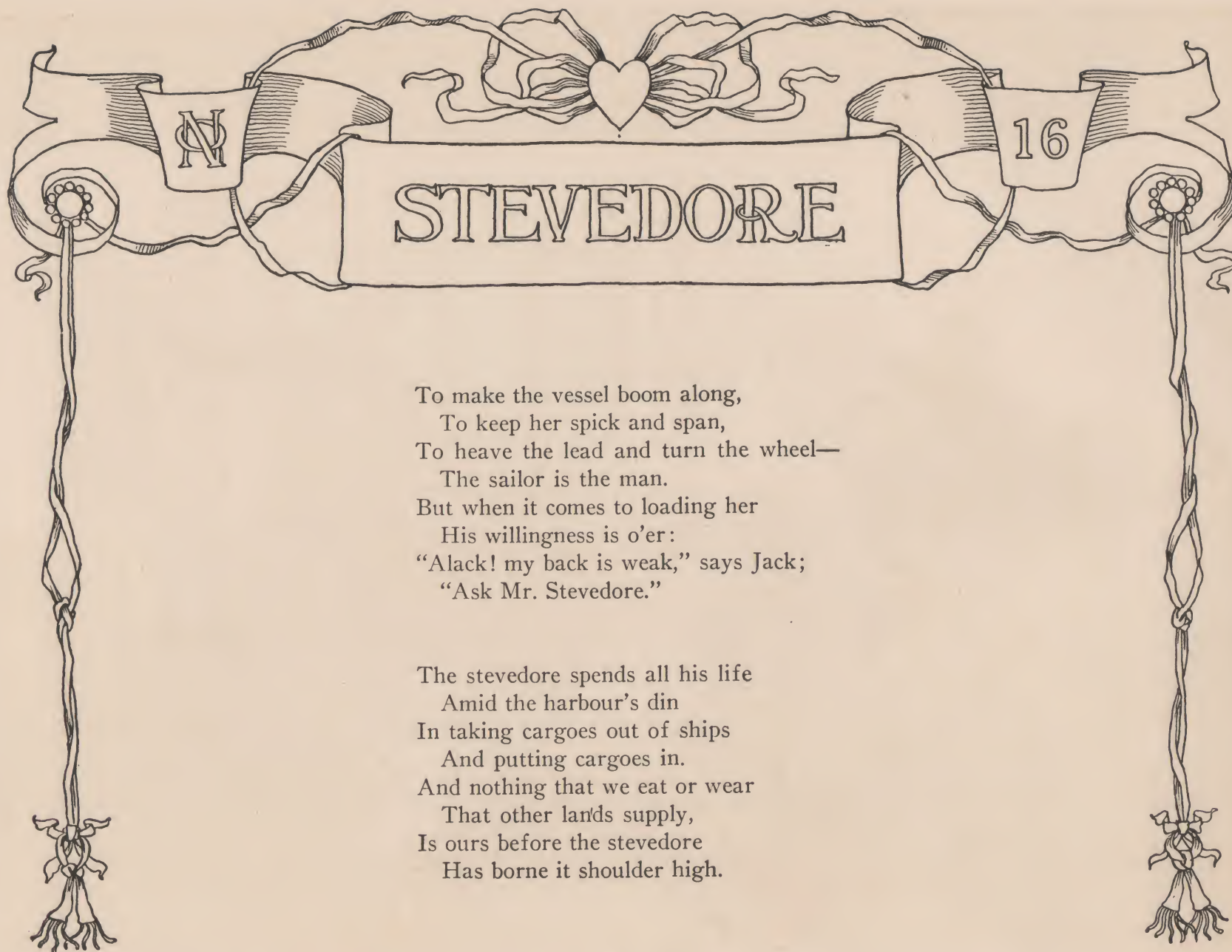
THE DAME

THE scholars in this village school
The Toilers' ranks should swell—
The Four-and-Twenty Toilers
Of whom our pages tell—
For every little scholar here
A Toiler is as well.

At least each scholar ought to be . .
But when the weather's warm,
And when the time is afternoon,
Then other thoughts will swarm,
And toil gives place to restlessness
Upon the polished form.

This girl will let her eyelids close,
And that will do the same,
And one will after-schooltime plans
In stealthy whispers frame;
One boy will think of fishing,
And one invent a game,
And one admire the centipede
He fondly hopes to tame;
Until the only Toiler left
(Poor lady!) is the Dame!

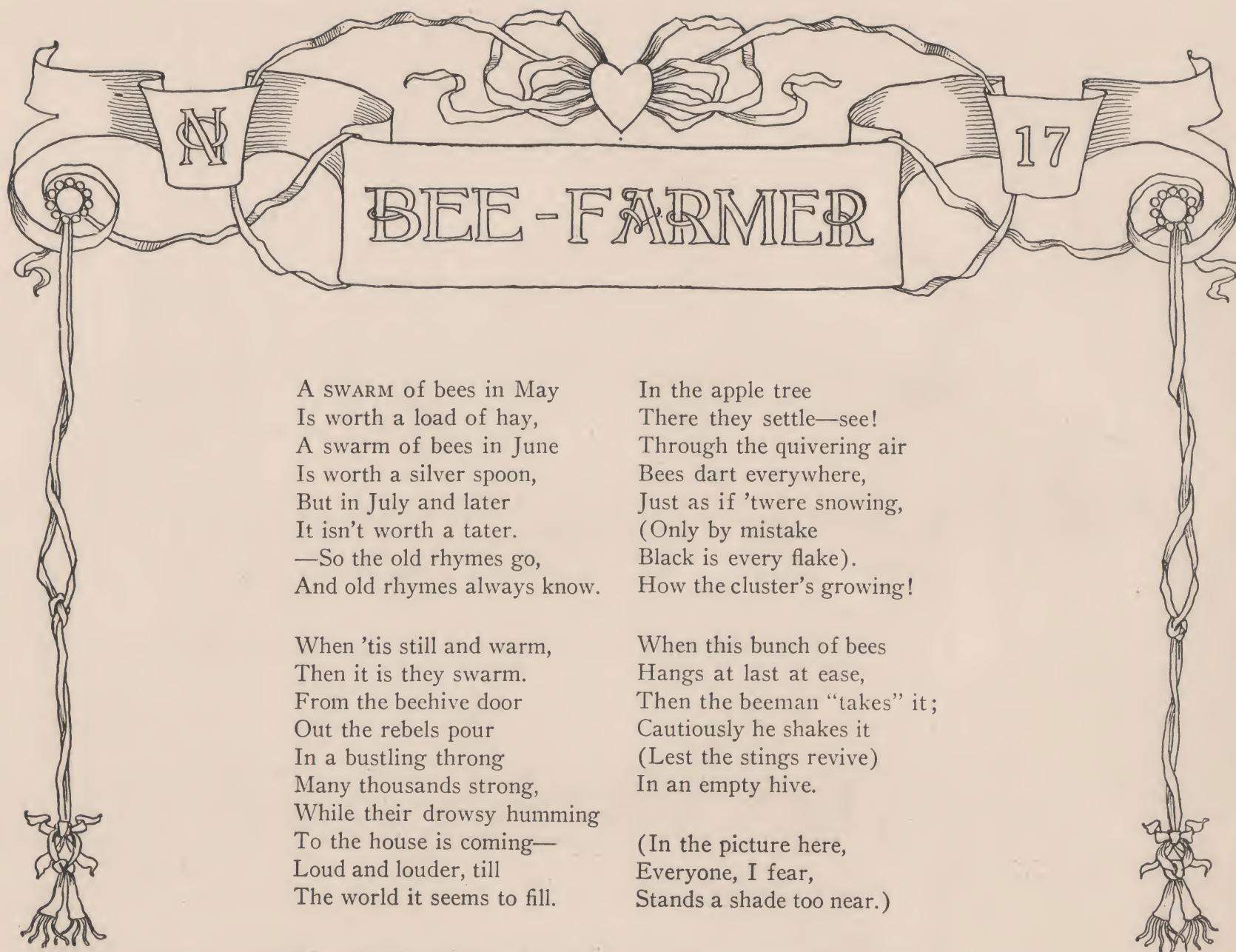




To make the vessel boom along,
To keep her spick and span,
To heave the lead and turn the wheel—
The sailor is the man.
But when it comes to loading her
His willingness is o'er:
"Alack! my back is weak," says Jack;
"Ask Mr. Stevedore."

The stevedore spends all his life
Amid the harbour's din
In taking cargoes out of ships
And putting cargoes in.
And nothing that we eat or wear
That other lands supply,
Is ours before the stevedore
Has borne it shoulder high.





A SWARM of bees in May
Is worth a load of hay,
A swarm of bees in June
Is worth a silver spoon,
But in July and later
It isn't worth a tater.
—So the old rhymes go,
And old rhymes always know.

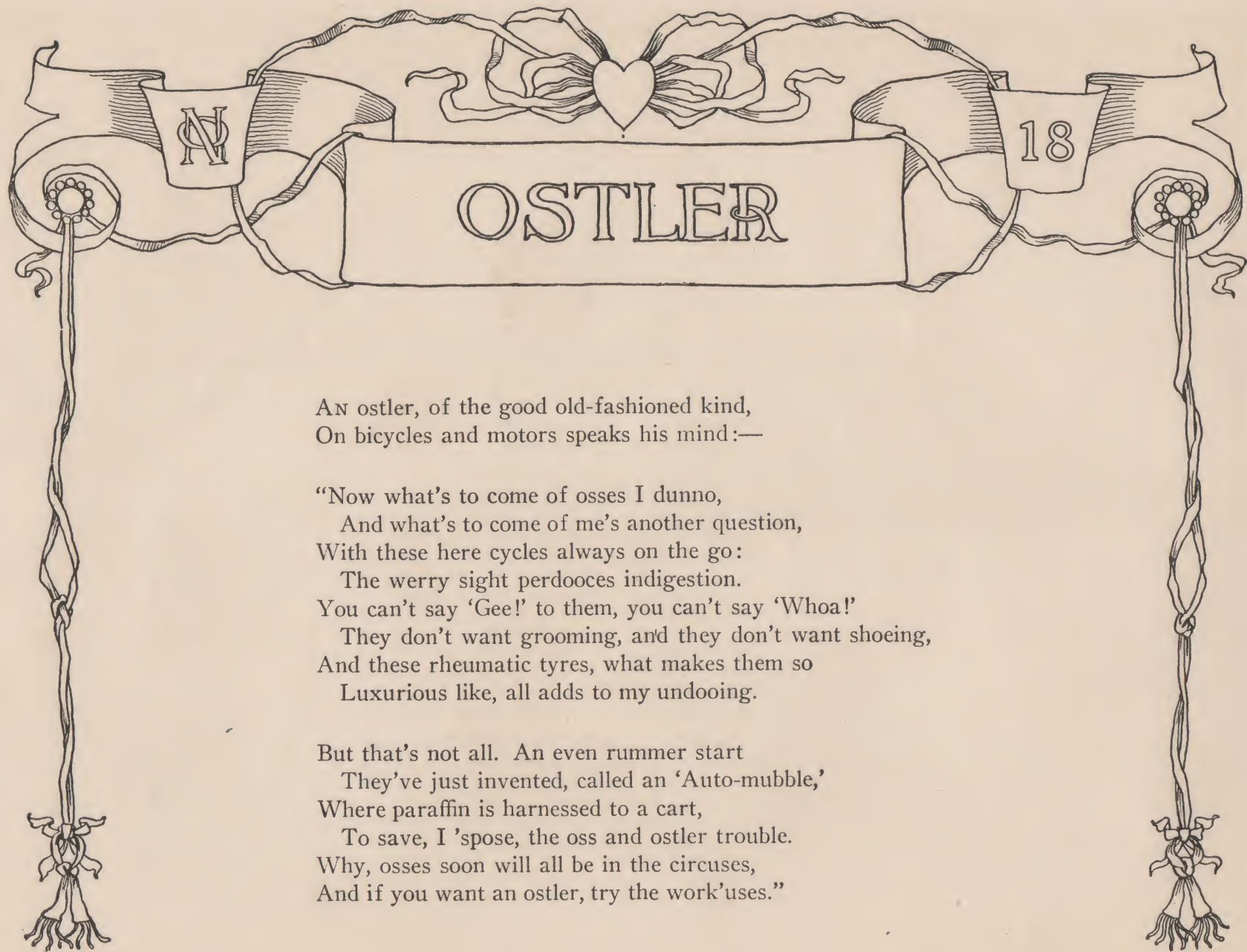
When 'tis still and warm,
Then it is they swarm.
From the beehive door
Out the rebels pour
In a bustling throng
Many thousands strong,
While their drowsy humming
To the house is coming—
Loud and louder, till
The world it seems to fill.

In the apple tree
There they settle—see!
Through the quivering air
Bees dart everywhere,
Just as if 'twere snowing,
(Only by mistake
Black is every flake).
How the cluster's growing!

When this bunch of bees
Hangs at last at ease,
Then the beeman "takes" it;
Cautiously he shakes it
(Lest the stings revive)
In an empty hive.

(In the picture here,
Everyone, I fear,
Stands a shade too near.)



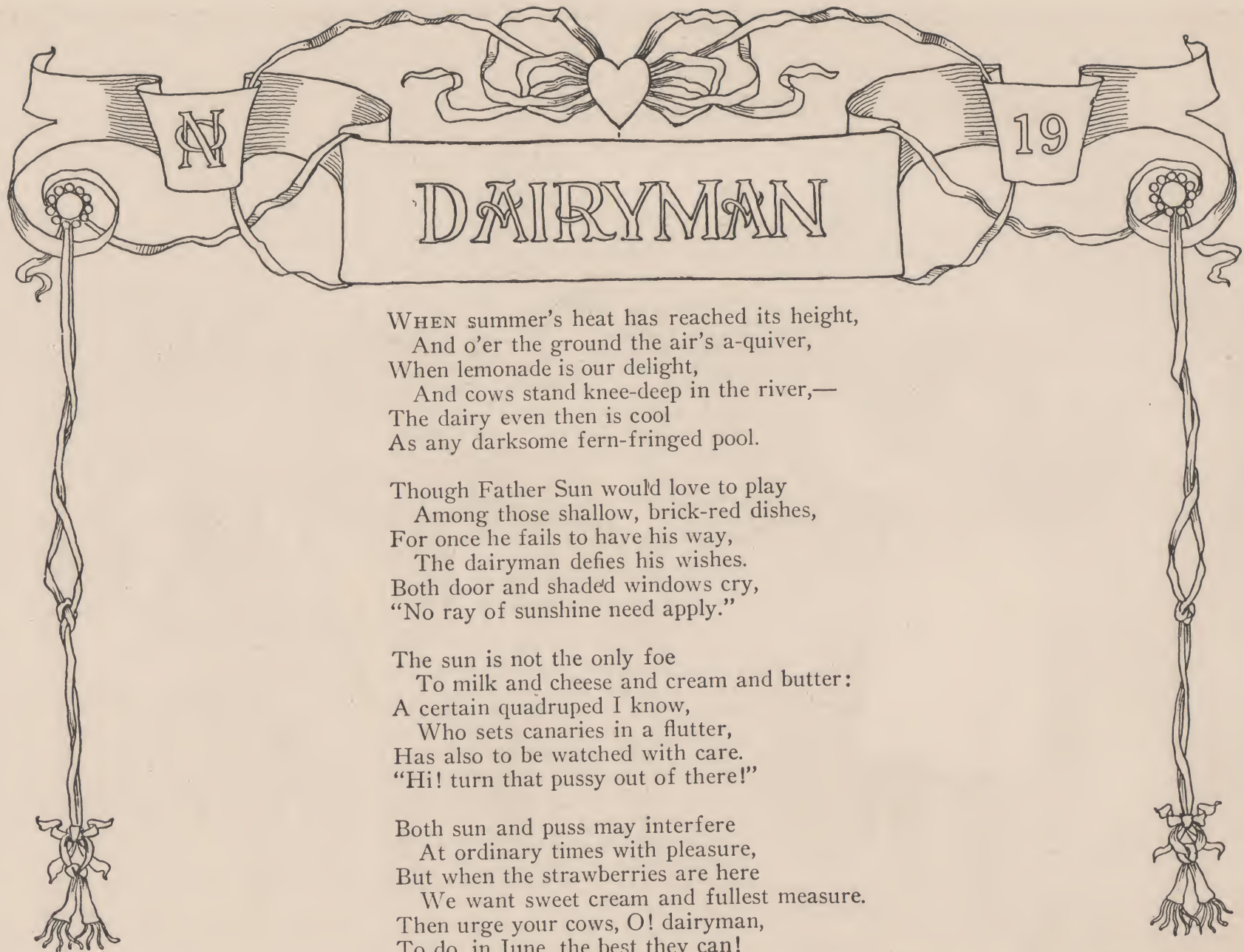


AN ostler, of the good old-fashioned kind,
On bicycles and motors speaks his mind:—

“Now what’s to come of osses I dunno,
And what’s to come of me’s another question,
With these here cycles always on the go:
The werry sight perdooces indigestion.
You can’t say ‘Gee!’ to them, you can’t say ‘Whoa!’
They don’t want grooming, and they don’t want shoeing,
And these rheumatic tyres, what makes them so
Luxurious like, all adds to my undooing.

But that’s not all. An even rummer start
They’ve just invented, called an ‘Auto-mubble,’
Where paraffin is harnessed to a cart,
To save, I ’spose, the oss and ostler trouble.
Why, osses soon will all be in the circuses,
And if you want an ostler, try the work’uses.”





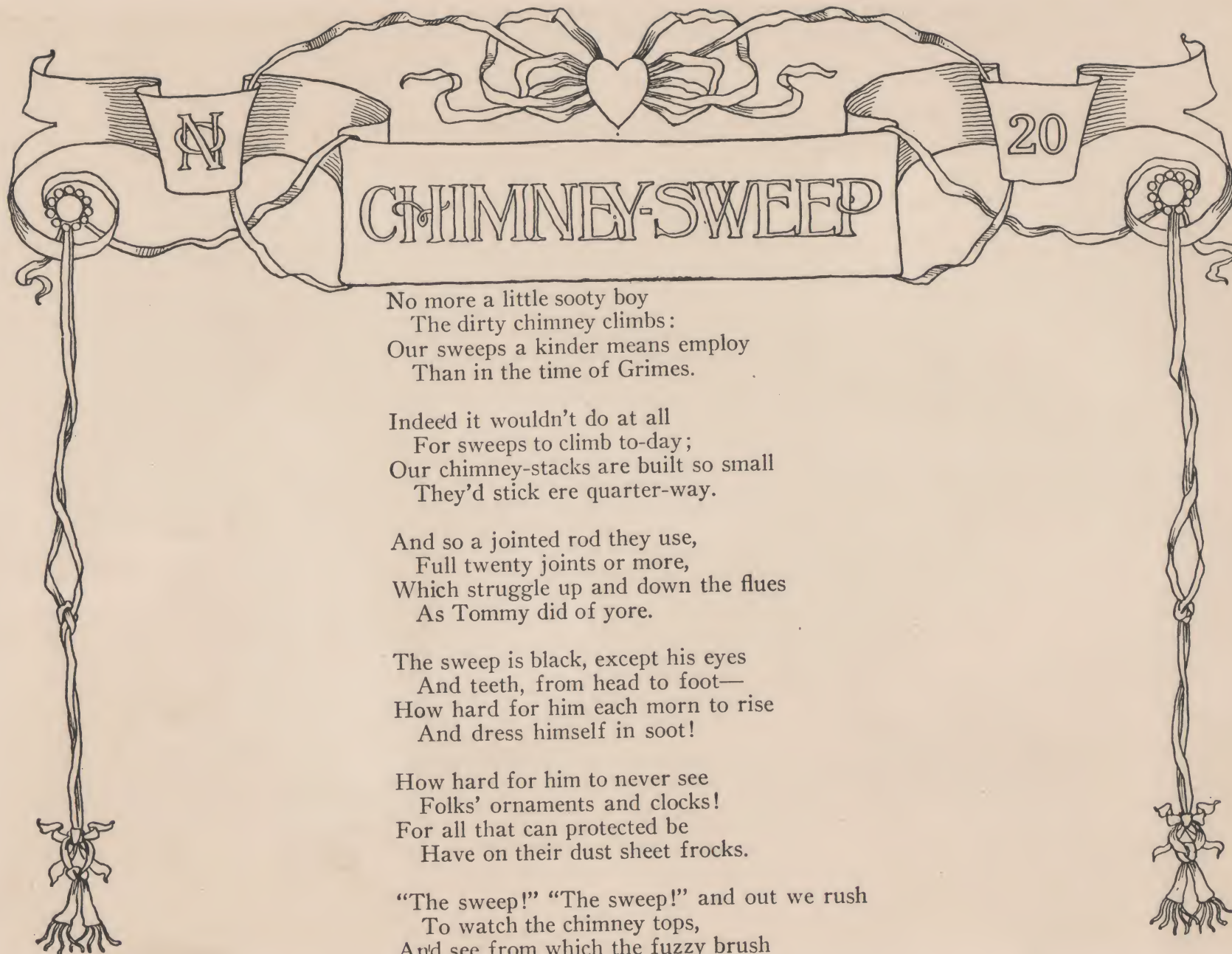
WHEN summer's heat has reached its height,
And o'er the ground the air's a-quiver,
When lemonade is our delight,
And cows stand knee-deep in the river,—
The dairy even then is cool
As any darksome fern-fringed pool.

Though Father Sun would love to play
Among those shallow, brick-red dishes,
For once he fails to have his way,
The dairyman defies his wishes.
Both door and shaded windows cry,
"No ray of sunshine need apply."

The sun is not the only foe
To milk and cheese and cream and butter:
A certain quadruped I know,
Who sets canaries in a flutter,
Has also to be watched with care.
"Hi! turn that pussy out of there!"

Both sun and puss may interfere
At ordinary times with pleasure,
But when the strawberries are here
We want sweet cream and fullest measure.
Then urge your cows, O! dairyman,
To do, in June, the best they can!





No more a little sooty boy
The dirty chimney climbs:
Our sweeps a kinder means employ
Than in the time of Grimes.

Indeed it wouldn't do at all
For sweeps to climb to-day;
Our chimney-stacks are built so small
They'd stick ere quarter-way.

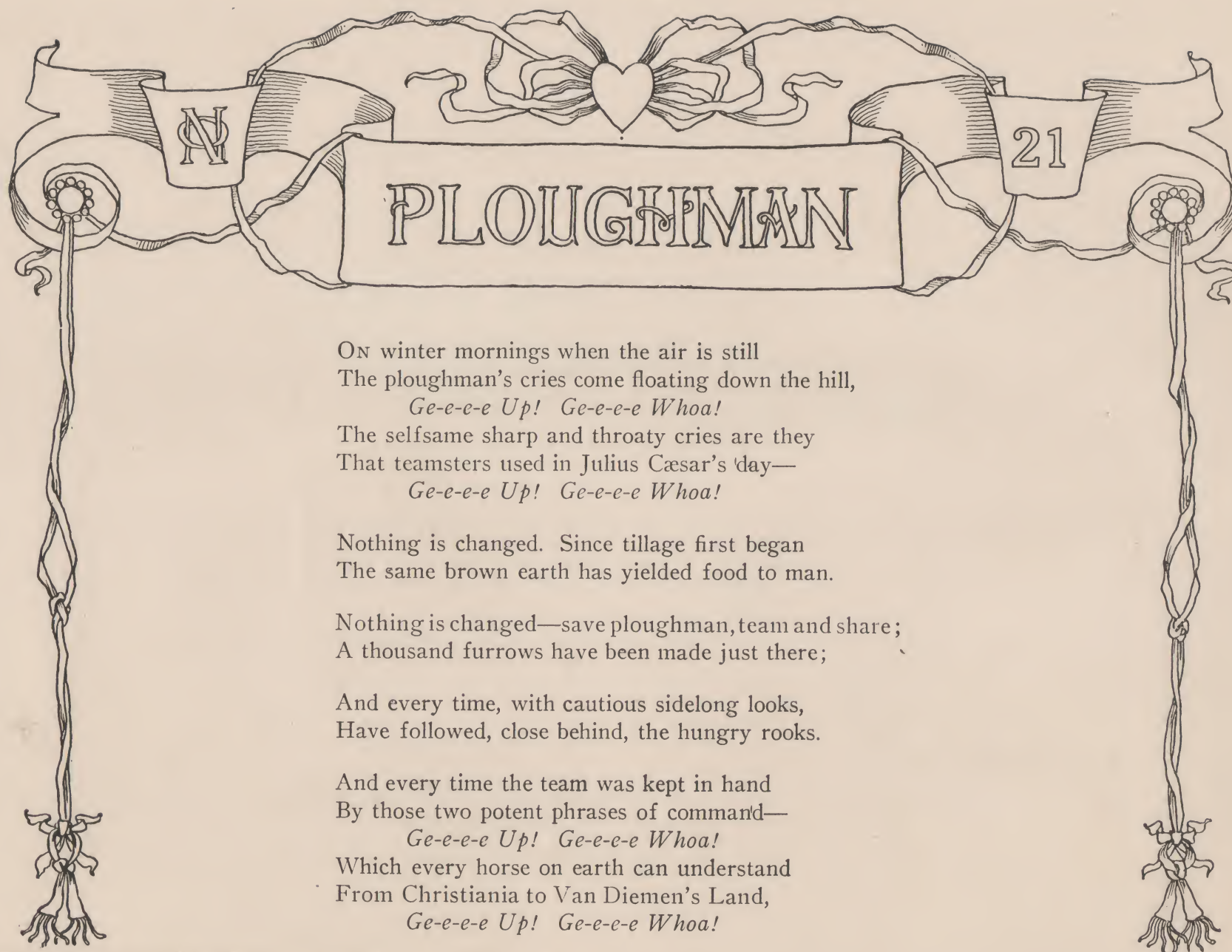
And so a jointed rod they use,
Full twenty joints or more,
Which struggle up and down the flues
As Tommy did of yore.

The sweep is black, except his eyes
And teeth, from head to foot—
How hard for him each morn to rise
And dress himself in soot!

How hard for him to never see
Folks' ornaments and clocks!
For all that can protected be
Have on their dust sheet frocks.

"The sweep!" "The sweep!" and out we rush
To watch the chimney tops,
And see from which the fuzzy brush
Spasmodically pops.





ON winter mornings when the air is still
The ploughman's cries come floating down the hill,
 Ge-e-e-e Up! Ge-e-e-e Whoa!
The selfsame sharp and throaty cries are they
That teamsters used in Julius Cæsar's day—
 Ge-e-e-e Up! Ge-e-e-e Whoa!

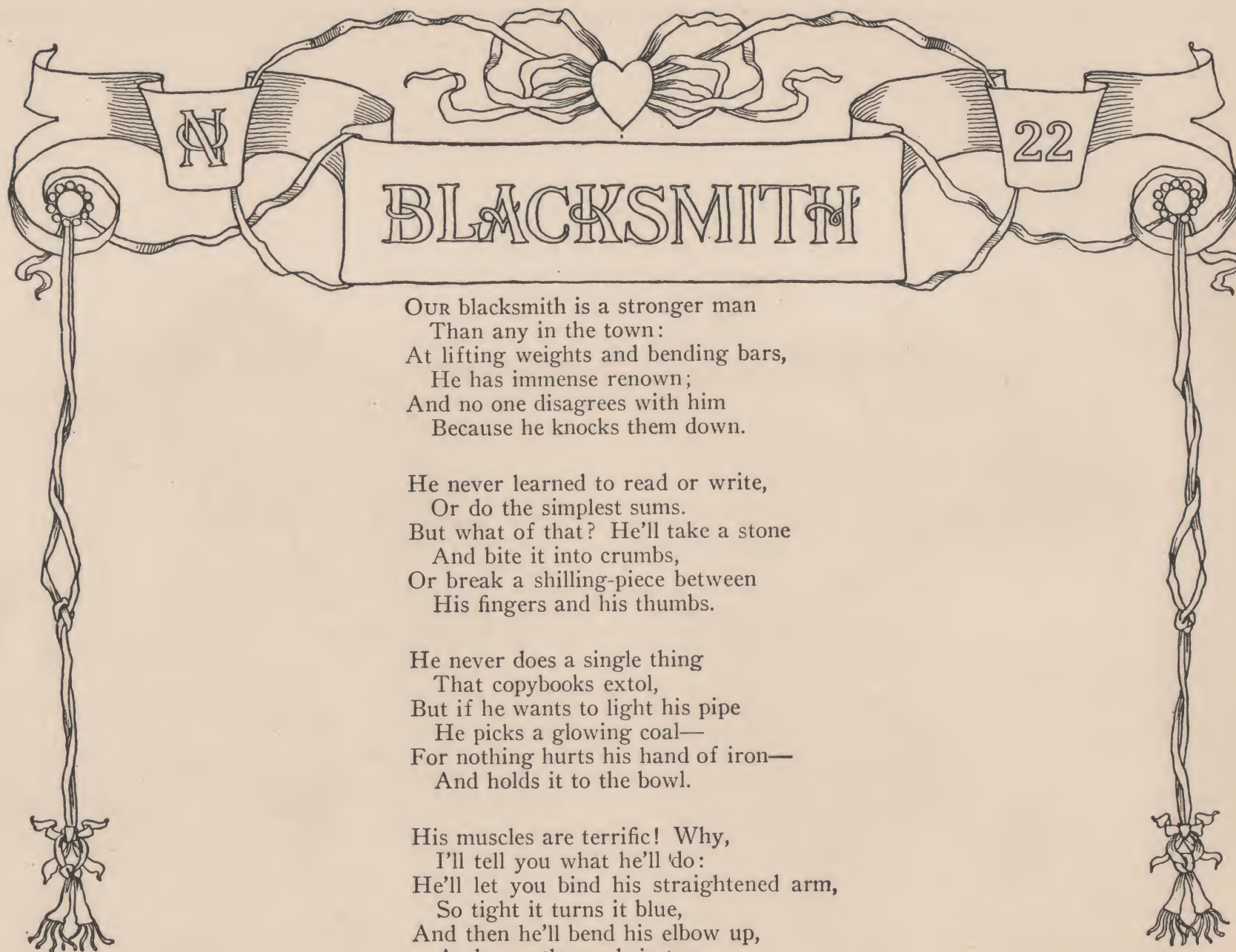
Nothing is changed. Since tillage first began
The same brown earth has yielded food to man.

Nothing is changed—save ploughman, team and share;
A thousand furrows have been made just there;

And every time, with cautious sidelong looks,
Have followed, close behind, the hungry rooks.

And every time the team was kept in hand
By those two potent phrases of command—
 Ge-e-e-e Up! Ge-e-e-e Whoa!
Which every horse on earth can understand
From Christiania to Van Diemen's Land,
 Ge-e-e-e Up! Ge-e-e-e Whoa!





OUR blacksmith is a stronger man
Than any in the town:
At lifting weights and bending bars,
He has immense renown;
And no one disagrees with him
Because he knocks them down.

He never learned to read or write,
Or do the simplest sums.
But what of that? He'll take a stone
And bite it into crumbs,
Or break a shilling-piece between
His fingers and his thumbs.

He never does a single thing
That copybooks extol,
But if he wants to light his pipe
He picks a glowing coal—
For nothing hurts his hand of iron—
And holds it to the bowl.

His muscles are terrific! Why,
I'll tell you what he'll do:
He'll let you bind his straightened arm,
So tight it turns it blue,
And then he'll bend his elbow up,
And snap the cords in two.





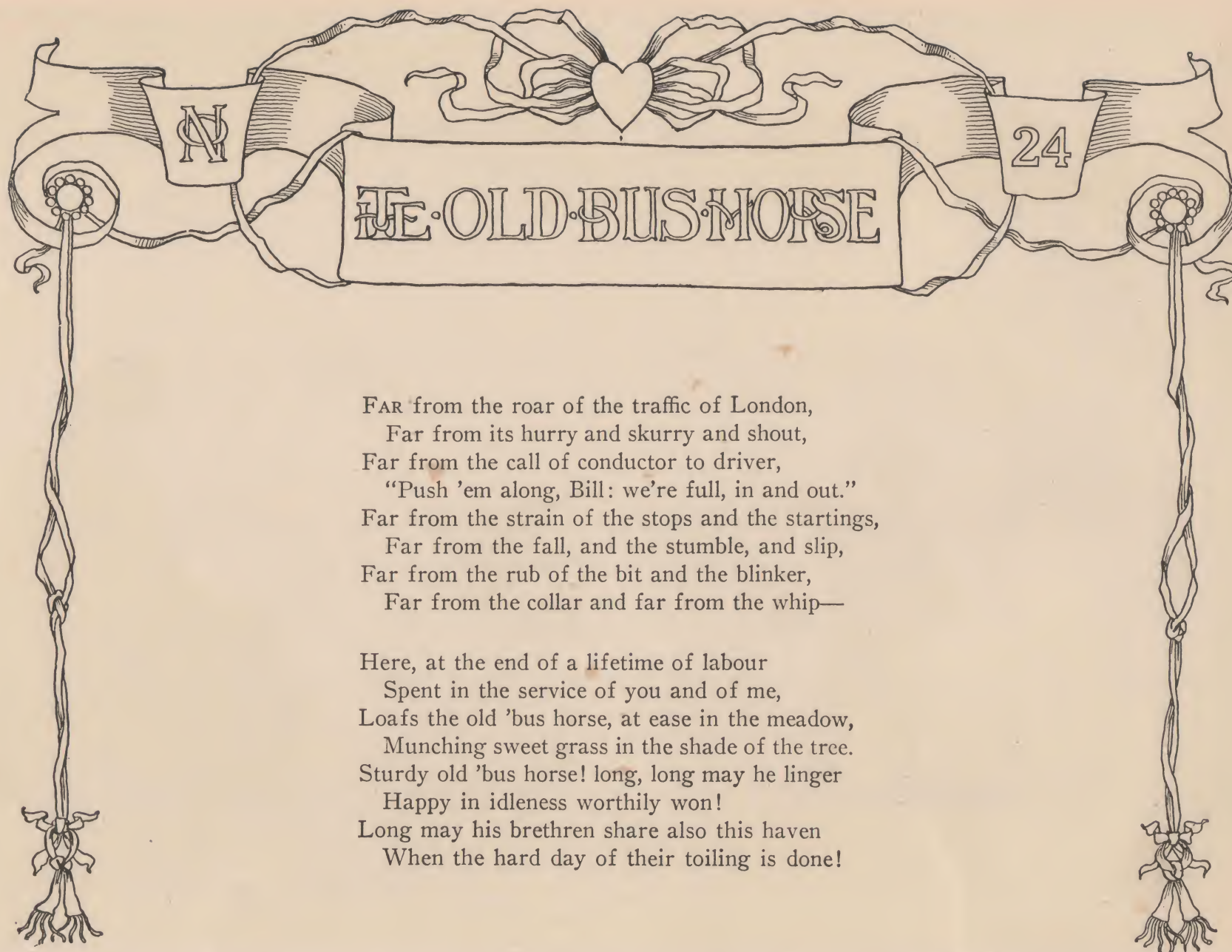
If Neptune really rules the sea,
And keeps it clean and blue,
The man who guards our pond must be
A kind of Neptune too.

He marches round and round the brink,
Superior and bland;
But when, alas! our vessels sink
He never lends a hand.

His look is almost kind (for him!)
When ducks are fed, but when
Poor Rover ventures in to swim,
"Now then!" he shouts, "Now then!"

I can't imagine why his way
Is so across-the-grained,
With sailing races every day
To keep him entertained.





FAR from the roar of the traffic of London,
Far from its hurry and skurry and shout,
Far from the call of conductor to driver,
 "Push 'em along, Bill: we're full, in and out."
Far from the strain of the stops and the startings,
Far from the fall, and the stumble, and slip,
Far from the rub of the bit and the blinker,
Far from the collar and far from the whip—

Here, at the end of a lifetime of labour
Spent in the service of you and of me,
Loafs the old 'bus horse, at ease in the meadow,
Munching sweet grass in the shade of the tree.
Sturdy old 'bus horse! long, long may he linger
Happy in idleness worthily won!
Long may his brethren share also this haven
When the hard day of their toiling is done!







